

WARGAMING SERIES INSIDE • HASTINGS REVISITED

# MILITARY ILLUSTRATED

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A detailed oil painting of Napoleon Bonaparte in profile, facing left. He is wearing a dark blue military coat with a white waistcoat and a red collar. He has a large, ornate gold epaulet on his right shoulder and a large, ornate gold sash on his left. He is holding a sword in his right hand. The background is dark and indistinct.

**Napoleon's Uniforms**

**Boers and the Mauser**

**Duke's Brush with Death  
Re-enactor Awards 1998**

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# Military Illustrated

Past & Present



**Napoleon in the uniform of the Grenadiers à Pied of the Imperial Guard. After a painting by Delaroche (Peter Newark Military Pictures)**

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# Readers' Letters

MI readers are invited to write to the Editor. Letters should be addressed to: Tim Newark, Military Illustrated, 43 Museum Street, London WC1A 1LY

## Prepared to fight

In his column 'Militaria' in issue 114, Frederick Wilkinson asks the question 'How long before some ignoramus suggests that antiques need controlling?' I am sorry to say that this question has already been raised by the Police Federation of England and Wales in its policy document issued in June 1996 entitled 'Where we stand on Firearms Law'. The final paragraph of this is entitled 'collecting and antiques' and I quote it verbatim, for information. 'Collecting should no longer constitute a good reason for granting a certificate. All antique weapons must be capable of being fired and bear a registration number.'

Readers will also be interested to know that the Police Federation of England and Wales does not believe that there should be any appeal against the refusal by a Chief Constable to grant a firearm or shotgun certificate. Comments to this effect have been made by the Deputy General Secretary Paul O'Brien in the April issue of Police Magazine. The message from all of this is very clear; the Police Federation of England and Wales does not want anyone to have any type of Firearm and will continue to campaign toward this end. This means that in turn, firearms collectors and re-enactors must now become political and join associations which are prepared to fight for their interests. No one who is interested in the ownership of firearms for whatever purpose can no longer afford to sit on the fence in the belief that what has just happened to target pistol shooters will never happen to them. Everyone who wishes to own a firearm for a legitimate purpose must now accept that they are in the political frame and that if they wish to continue to enjoy the right to own that firearm, they must be prepared to fight for it.

*Bill Harriman, Wrexham*

## RAF Chestnut

Have just finished reading the generally excellent article on the subject of the RAF airman's uniform of World War Two in the August 1997 issue (No.111) of your magazine. It is particularly pleasing to read of the clothing and equipment as worn or carried by the humble airman, as so many articles concentrate on the more glamorous officers and aircrew, or the Americans! However, as this article will be regarded by many readers as a solid work of reference for the foreseeable future, I hope that

you will accept the following comments and criticisms of certain statements made.

Firstly, the hoary old chestnut about the 'albatross' shoulder badge as worn by RAF airmen should be consigned to the blast furnace once and for all. This myth seems to crop up every twenty years or so, and despite being thoroughly discredited at every appearance, it miraculously arises, phoenix like, as a solid 'fact', to confuse yet another generation of uninitiated souls and dismay those who remember the last time it was blasted out of the water. Once and for all, the bird was an eagle; NEVER an albatross. This myth seems to have originated with the Royal Navy, and has the benefit of an apparently logical explanation. This is that it was the symbol of the old Royal Naval Air Service and became part of the naval contribution to the uniform of the new Royal Air Force in 1918, having previously adorned the cap badge of RNAS officers, and the buttons of officers and seamen alike. Unfortunately for this theory, the RNAS bird was, right from the start, an eagle, and there is absolutely no dispute about this.

Secondly, the 'rank' of airman immediately above AC1 is 'Leading Aircraftman', NOT Leading Aircraftsman. This is one of the most common spelling errors encountered in writings about the RAF.

Thirdly, the Field Service (FS) cap did NOT replace the OA SD cap after December 1939 as is implied on page 14, nor was the RAF following the British Army in its reintroduction of the FS cap. So far as I know (and please correct me if I am wrong!) the Royal Flying Corps was the only British Corps to employ the FS cap during the Great War of 1914/18, when it was frequently still referred to as the 'Austrian cap' in deference to its origins the previous century. I believe the Austrian cap was adopted by various British Army regiments and Corps from the 1880s onward (and possibly earlier) but it abruptly disappeared in about 1908. The Royal Air Force reintroduced the FS cap in the latter half of 1936 AHEAD of the British Army, which then reintroduced it in conjunction with the new Battledress in period 1937/39. The RAF airmen thus had two caps during period 1936/39, but only the FS cap from 1940 onwards.

Fourthly, the white flash as seen on the FS cap of the airman on page 14 does NOT indicate that he is an officer candidate, although this has sometimes been the case. During World

War Two the RAF introduced this white flash to indicate "Aircrew u/t" (Aircrew under training); it had nothing to do with officer cadet status during the period of the war.

Fifthly, the 'Broad Arrow' symbol was by no means exclusive to the (British) War Department. From about 1943 onwards this symbol was also adopted by the Air Ministry in place of the crown and 'AM' device, and this usage continued well into the 1970s.

Finally, RAF kitbags were marked with painted on blue stripes only when the owner was embarking for overseas. Two kitbags were required to carry all the gear necessary for such postings, and the bag NOT required during the voyage (and thus stowed in the ships hold) was marked with two 2" stripes, spaced 2" apart. The other bag, containing items which were required during the voyage, was marked with just one 2" stripe. This same system of striping on kitbags was continued into the 1960s.

Nevertheless, I did find much of interest in the article, and thought the photographs in particular were excellent. I have been cataloguing the clothing collection of the RNZAF Museum for the last couple of years and thus appreciate good reliable details on such items as shirts, braces and pullovers, mundane though they may be. The Museum also has a good selection of badges, flying clothing, etc, along with a growing reference library, which has provided the basis for my statement above.

Looking forward to further issues of Military Illustrated.

*David Duxbury, Christchurch, New Zealand*

## Martin Brayley replies

Some wartime references state the sleeve badge to be an Albatross, however, it is now generally accepted that it is indeed an Eagle. The error has no doubt been perpetuated by WWII RAF veterans who as new recruits were informed that the RAF bird was an Albatross, a passive bird of great strength, stamina and incomparable endurance of flight. The Nazis on the other hand displayed an Eagle, a bird that preyed on other weaker birds, typifying Nazi tyranny. This would seem to have been a form of propaganda, but at what level it may have been authorised (if at all) is not known.

The FS cap was introduced by AMO A93/36. It officially replaced the stiff SD cap when the latter was withdrawn in December 1939.

Period photographs show the white flash on the FS cap being worn by officer cadets at Cranwell during WWII. It was, of course, also used by Aircrew Under Training.

From items examined by the author it can be concluded that the Crown AM marking first appeared on RAF clothing and necessities in 1940, the broad arrow replacing it on clothing from 1942.

### McRae's Medals

There has been a great deal of media coverage in Canada of late regarding World War One medals awarded to the late LCOL John McRae, MD, Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps the author of the famous poem, *In Flanders Fields*. The medals were sold recently for the sum of \$400,000. (Canadian Funds) to a businessman in Toronto, Canada who immediately presented them to the Canadian War Museum, Ottawa Ontario. The three service medals appear to consist of two in fact, for service in the Boer War.

LCOL McRae's military service is outlined briefly in Mr Martin Gilbert's excellent book on the First World War. I wonder however, if the only medal awarded for service in the Canadian Army from 1914 to LCOL McRae's death on 28 January 1918 was in fact the British Empire Victory Medal? Perhaps a reader could advise.

John J MacLeod, Nova Scotia, Tel & Fax (902) 873 3113

### Red Caps

2nd Infantry Division, Pro Coy Royal Military Police Old Comrades Link-up. If you are an ex Red Cap who served with the division and would like to make contact with old comrades, please send a SAE to D L Palmer, ex RMP, Co-ordinator, 10 Main Road, Woolverstone, Suffolk IP9 1AL for an enrolment form.

### Join the Russians!

Enlist in Tsar Alexander's St Petersburg's Grenadiers and fight against the anti-Christ Napoleon Bonaparte, whose tyrannical ambitions are aimed not just against Holy Russia but the whole of Europe. This is a new regiment which will form a new brigade within the Napoleonic Association. It will also be the first Russian regiment in the West and like the regiments in the East, the St Petersburg Grenadiers will base itself on the 1812-1814 period.

Why join a Russian regiment? Russian troops fought all over Europe, not just against France, but Sweden and the Ottoman Empire. David Chandler wrote in his book *On the Napoleonic Wars* 'Any consideration of the vast canvas of the Napoleonic Wars would be hopelessly incomplete without the troops and achievements of Holy Russia'. Russian troops earned the respect of friend and foe alike. Also recreating a Russian regiment gives a different point of view to Napoleonic re-enactment than the usual British and French regiments.

## Military Commanders Competition

Lt Col Michael Lee Lanning's *100 Most Influential Military Leaders* (Robinson £7.99) has inspired many alternate lists from our readers. Below is one of the winning entrants from Ian Thompson of Skelmersdale, Lancashire. Mr Thompson and the other winners will each be sent a copy of this provocative book.

### For influencing other commanders:

- 1 **Sun Tzu** — because everybody claims to have read his work.
- 2 **Epanimondas of Thebes** — exponent of the 'refused flank', an invention later to be claimed by many others
- 3 **Iphicrates of Athens** — for the offensive use of light infantry and the invention of the infantry that was to dominate the following era — the pikeman (and because if you add in the heavy cavalry you get Alexander!)
- 4 **Julius Caesar** — much studied, his works taught those commanders who write accounts of their own 'exploits' how to make themselves look good rather than always tell the truth.
- 5 **Pyrrhus of Epirus** — since his name is often used as an excuse for high casualties.
- 6 **Napoleon 1** — also much studied, reshaped France and Europe, responsible for commanders' (of many periods) desire to be portrayed with a hand inside their jackets.
- 7 **George Armstrong Custer** — possibly to provide lessons in what to be avoided rather than imitated — and in case it is thought there are not enough Americans on the list.

### For their influence on a global scale:

- 8 **Adolf Hitler** — his legacy remains with us today. Many of his decisions could have won a World War, but some of them lost it.
- 9 **George Washington** — it depends how important the creation of the United States is held to be, but his very name can blind historians (especially American ones) to his shortcomings, as well as those of his opponents.
- 10 **Josef Stalin** — nearly caused the USSR's defeat at the start, but won the peace at the end, of World War Two; hence shaped Europe and the world in the aftermath.
- 11 **Admiral Yamamoto** — the attack on Pearl Harbour could have won Japan's War against the US but by bringing the Americans into the Second World War it helped to ensure the defeat of the Axis powers.

### For influence on perhaps a less than global scale:

- 12 **Publius Quintilius Varus** — Rome's failure to conquer Germany had a profound effect on subsequent history.
- 13 **Hugh Dowding** — Fighter Command determined the fate of Britain in 1940. He had preserved it during the Battle of France despite Churchill's urgings. Proved right, he was therefore sacked. He may not have won the war, but certainly ensured that it would not be lost.
- 14 **Attila the Hun** — if not for affecting Asia and Europe, for making his race's name mean 'rapacious barbarian' ever afterwards (and showing how not to celebrate victory).
- 15 **Douglas Haig** — convinced the British war-fighting establishment (and others) that his was the only way to win; thus ensuring that even Hitler's provocations in the 1930s could not outweigh the fear of a repeat performance.
- 16 **Scipio Africanus** — Carthage's final defeat ensured Rome's subsequent lengthy dominance.

### And the rest...

- 17 **Erwin Rommel** — his tactics may not have been entirely original but he attracted a disproportionate amount of enemy attention (even by a tribute); considered a threat, even when ill, by the Nazis and important enough to be 'rehabilitated' posthumously by the Allies.
- 18 **Oliver Cromwell** — since his name is a byword for tyranny and he is also famous for fighting against it he cannot be omitted. Also omnipresent if not omnipotent, since historians of every locality in Britain insist he was at every battle, siege and skirmish of the Civil War.
- 19 **William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland** — popular with his men, if not his enemies; confirmed the Hanoverian succession and Scotland's resentment of same. Fairly or not, his name is now a byword for cruelty.

### Finally...

- 20 **Lt Col M L Lanning** — provoked controversy when his list of influential military leaders was misread as a 'league table' of talented commanders.

A great deal of preparation has already been done, but there is still plenty to do before the regiment takes the field, hopefully sometime in 1998, everything will be ready. However this delay will give the regiment time to recruit, obtain uniforms and get to know each other. Though all the commands will be in Russian,

you do not have to speak the language to join, because you will be taught to recognise the commands. Russian is easier to learn than you might think, *leva* is left and *Prava* right. For more information contact: Laurence Spring, 12 Puckshill, Knaphill, Woking, Surrey GU 21 2BS. Tel. 01483 489684.



# Books

**Machine Guns of World War I** by Robert Bruce; Windrow & Greene Ltd. 128 pages, hardback. ISBN 1 85915 078 0. Price £25.00

Machine guns were a major factor in ensuring that the First World War became a largely static conflict with deep trenches and casualty figures of huge proportions. While artillery could destroy ground and men, machine guns in or close to the front line could react quickly and lethally in defence and provide intimate support to an attack. New organisations were set up and new tactics developed to make the best use of them. Countering them in the assault led to a totally new weapon, the tank, itself using machine guns for effectiveness.

The second title in the series, 'Live Firing Classic Military Weapons in Colour Photographs', covers the guns which saw action on the Western Front. Specifically it covers the British Vickers and Lewis, France's Hotchkiss and Chauchat — all used by American troops as well as their original users — plus Germany's Maxim in original and lightened forms and the MP18 submachine gun. Each is examined and illustrated by taking original, working examples and photographing them being fired by crews dressed in appropriate uniforms in realistic conditions.

Alongside the actual firing sessions, the background history of each gun is described as are the basic techniques of using machine guns in static warfare. Guns are also shown in great detail, including photos of them being field-stripped as well as contemporary photos and extracts from manuals. Equally importantly, the experience of using them is described by the people who took part. Free of the stresses of using them in anger, and the results of years of trying to forget or remember, these impressions tell those who were not present something of the advantages and disadvantages of specific guns.

Thus we find that the Vickers

was solid and reliable, as was the similar Maxim although it was harder to get into action even in lightened form. The Hotchkiss was dependable and very well made. Of the lighter guns, the Lewis is manageable and easy to use, while the Chauchat or 'Show-show' as many a Doughboy knew it lived up to its original reputation for unreliability. Most surprisingly, the MP18 turns out to be heavier and less manageable than expected. Given the part played by these guns in the Great War generally and their effect in bringing about changes in warfare, this work not only makes interesting reading but gives considerable food for thought for anyone studying this era.

*Peter Brown*

**Armoured Firepower — The Development of Tank Armament 1939-45** by Peter Gugin; Sutton Publishing Ltd. 270 pages, hardback. ISBN 0 7509 1387 8. Price £25

World War Two saw great strides in the development of AFVs, with a race to provide better firepower and protection which see-sawed back and forth. An account of the development of the gun side of this battle would be very informative and is long overdue.

This book unfortunately is not the story of gun development. It is a short history of WW2 tanks, covering Britain, Germany, the Soviet Union and the United States. The emphasis is on their armament, but what coverage there is of this is limited to stating that improved guns were fitted and listing the vehicles they were fitted in. There is no technical coverage of gun development, and the only facts and figures listed are basic sizes and weights. Muzzle velocities are quoted but not armour penetration.

The result is that very little is said about the subject the title would lead a reader to expect. There is nothing new in the coverage of development, while several errors and inaccuracies are included. Basic notes on tank design and summaries of national

trends in tank guns are included, but they cover so little of the book as to be all but swamped by the main narrative.

Illustrations do not help matters either. Many photos — notably those marked as 'author's collection' — are poorly reproduced, and far too many cut part of the subject off with one or both ends not shown. Most are well known images, while there are some good pictures the few which are printed to a large size are spread across two pages, so a portion of them disappears into the spine of the book. Line drawings are better, those of various types of ammunition come from original manuals but do little to improve the overall standard of the book. There is nothing to recommend this book to anyone interested in AFV development, it says too little, takes too long to say it and costs far more than it is worth.

*Peter Brown*

**Battlefront: 6th November 1917 The Fall of Passchendaele:** (Public Record Office, 1997) £12.99

**Passchendaele The Fight for the Village:** by Nigel Cave (Leo Cooper, 1997) pp144, paperback, £9.95.

**Fricourt-Mametz Somme:** by Michael Steadman (Leo Cooper, 1997), pp168, paperback, £9.95.

This month's crop of reviews includes three items on the First World War that are mercifully free of the taint of the butcher and bungler. *Battlefront... The fall of Passchendaele* is a pack issued by the Public Record Office, consisting of reproductions of original documents, maps and photographs, and a booklet that sets the battle into context. The capture of Passchendaele by the Canadians was the final act of the Third Battle of Ypres in 1917, and the name of this obscure Belgian village, otherwise notable only for a make of cheese, has of course come to be applied to the entire offensive. Much nonsense has been written about this battle, and *Battlefront... The fall of Passchendaele* is an admirable attempt to allow people

to make up their own mind by examining the documents, without a war poet in sight. The introductory booklet, by Christopher Staerck, in places leans heavily on an essay that I wrote ten years ago. Such has been the pace of research on the First World War in the last decade that some of my judgements need to be modified, readers should consult John Lee's introduction to Chris McCarthy's *Passchendaele: The Day by Day Account* (Arms and Armour, 1996).

Without a doubt, teachers at all levels will find this document pack extremely useful, while battlefield tourers can profitably use it in combination with Nigel Cave's *Passchendaele: The Fight for the Village*. This is one of the latest contributions to the Battleground Europe series, and it follows the by now well tried format of combining analysis of operations with maps, first hand accounts and descriptions of the modern battlefield. Armed with one of these books one can do rather more on a battlefield tour than simply admire monuments, empathise in cemeteries or stand on a ridge vaguely aware that a battle was fought somewhere in the area. Previously, if one wanted to examine an action in a particular location, one had to delve deep into original records, and unit histories. The usual result was that one had to juggle a sheaf of photocopies in one hand and a volume of the official history in the other, usually in the teeth of force 8 gale. Now, this series has taken much of the donkey work out of conducting staff rides (as 'professional' battlefield touring should really be described). Father Cave's book, and Michael Steadman's *Fricourt-Mametz: Somme* volumes are immensely useful research tools, which are absolutely essential reading for anyone undertaking a battlefield tour of the Western Front. I 'test drove' the Passchendaele volume on an Ypres tour recently, and found it invaluable for finding new stands, and as a basis for further research. I look forward to further additions to the series.

*G D Sheffield*



# Faces Behind the Books

*Military Illustrated* interviews some of the leading publishers and editors of military history books. This month, we talk to Ian Drury, Editor of Military Books at HarperCollins

## How did you get started in military publishing?

A packager was committed to producing a partwork for Orbis called *War Machine*: a 120 part (extended to 144 part) weekly encyclopedia of military weapons/equipment. I had just graduated from university, and the idea of being paid to edit a military partwork seemed rather fine. Having covered everything from the Aardvark (F-111) to the Zero (Mitsubishi A6M), the Abbot (105mm SP gun) to Z-class destroyers, it was difficult to envisage a follow-up. But I had the idea for a 'how to' partwork, 'how to storm embassies full of terrorists and hostages or defend a village on the IGB from 5th Soviet Guards Tank Army... modern military tactics presented in an easily-digested format, rather like a DIY manual. The result was *Combat & Survival*, which ran and ran, and later evolved into a monthly magazine after a run of 100 (weekly) parts. Sadly, the publisher decided to sell the magazine and diversify into crime (yes, the Yorkshire Ripper's exploits, served up in gratuitous detail — as entertainment) and pornography (fine by me, but insufficiently heterosexual for my taste). I went freelance, writing several books on the American Civil War and World War I. In 1994 HarperCollins acquired the rights to the Jane's name in the trade market, and I was hired as an inhouse editor to develop a new list from scratch. And here I am, delighted to have proved that £3.99 reference guides to World War II warships/tanks/aircraft can still sell in quantity: there definitely is a new generation of military enthusiasts out there despite, Ecstasy, FHM, Tele-tubbies and other distractions of the 1990s.

## Which is the military book you are most proud of publishing?

*Bomber Command* by Professor Richard Overy. This is an important corrective to the received view of Bomber Command, so evident when the statue to Sir Arthur Harris was unveiled in 1992. It combines a wealth of eyewitness material from veterans with a modern academic overview from Britain's foremost military historian. The interviews were arranged for a TV documentary film, *Reaping the Whirlwind*, but the finished programme only used a tiny fraction of the compelling testimony the researchers had assembled. Illustrated with many previously-unpublished photographs including some from Harris' family, this is revisionist history at its best. (He said modestly)

## Which are your favourite military books of all time?

I tried to pick a 'desert island selection' of ten top titles (50/50 fiction/non-fiction), but the more I looked at my book shelves, the harder it became:

Non-fiction

*Quartered safe out here*, George Macdonald Fraser — the single best memoir of frontline infantry service in the 20th century and a fitting memorial to the 'Forgotten Army'.

*Sagittarius Rising*, Cecil Lewis — the best pilot's memoir of any war.

*The War the Infantry Knew*, ed Captain Dunn — thankfully available once again in paperback, this is the best single summary of the British experience in World War I.

*Bugles and a Tiger/The Road Past Mandalay*, John Masters — Sorry, I can't decide which one is more important, his marvellous evocation of the Indian army on the eve of World War II or the Burma campaign and the Chindit disaster, when British officers end up shooting their own wounded.

*Hell in a small place/The destruction of Groupe Mobile 100*, Bernard Fall — more indecision, I'm afraid. His accounts of the French colonial army and its defeat in IndoChina remain utterly compelling, even in the wake of so much material on America's war in Vietnam.

Fiction

*Flashman in the Great Game*, George Macdonald Fraser — or most Flashman titles for that matter. The combination of salacious period detail with 'Flash Harry's eye for the main chance have kept him a firm favourite since first published.

*The Exploits/Adventures of Gerard*, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle — the quintessential Englishman's ideal of a Frenchman, 'all spurs and moustaches, with no thoughts beyond women and horses' has always appealed, tho' I've never been one for horses.

*The Nightrunners of Bengal*, John Masters — his brilliant Indian Mutiny novel, narrowly piping *Bhowani Junction* to the post. The tension he creates in the chapters leading up to the mutiny are (for my money) unsurpassed in English fiction.

*Master and Commander*, Patrick O'Brien — or any of his Aubrey/Maturin novels for



Ian Drury (kneeling) with rival publishers in sight

that matter: addictive, historically convincing novels of the age of sail. *The Thirteenth Valley*, John Del Vecchio — my favourite of the numerous Vietnam novels, although *Indian Country* (Philip Caputo) and Joe Haldeman's science fiction novels come close.

## What are your major interests outside of military publishing?

Practical pistol shooting (now only allowed to representatives of the pharmaceutical industry — and I'm still waiting for my compensation). The music of Mary Chapin Carpenter, Kathy Mattea, Richard Thompson and Patty Loveless. Jim Beam Green Label, Tallisker single malt and Abbot ale.

## Which books are you looking forward to publishing over the next year?

*Scotland's Wars of Independence 1297-1354*, the first serious study of the subject since 1913 and scheduled for publication just as the elections for a new Scottish parliament begin next year. One might decry the break-up of the United Kingdom, but at least we're poised to make a buck out of it.



## Book of the Month

**1815: the Waterloo Campaign** by Peter Hofschröder; Greenhill Books; 432 pp, 21 b/w plates, 36 maps; bibliography and index; ISBN 1853673048; £25.00

This month sees the publication of a controversial new book on the battle of Waterloo campaign. MI interviews the author, Peter Hofschröder, and recaps the main point of debate in this volume.

**There are so many books on Waterloo already. What is different about this one?**

It will be the first work in English on the subject that draws extensively on German and Dutch sources, including eye-witness accounts and official battle reports, it will be based on archive material that, in part, has never been used before, and it will be the first detailed examination of the relationship between the Duke of Wellington and his Prussian allies. Finally, it will demonstrate that the traditional view of the Waterloo Campaign being primarily a conflict between the British Crown and Napoleon Bonaparte, with the Prussians playing only a minor role, bears no relationship to the facts. Most of the fighting in this campaign fell on the shoulder of German soldiers — Prussians, Hanoverians, Brunswickers and Nassauers, who suffered the bulk of the casualties.

**You mention 'official battle reports'. What are these?**

The commander of every Prussian formation from battalion upwards was required to write a report on any action fought. These were then deposited in the War Archives. Using this material, I have reconstructed the most detailed account of the fighting at Ligny ever written, going down to platoon level. I show that in the street fighting of 16 June 1815, the standard formation used by the Prussian infantry was the company column — made more famous in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. I also show how the seven-battalion brigade formations were adapted for the nine-battalion brigades of 1815. Finally, much of the eye-witness material published in German has never before been made available to the English-speaking reader. There will be a wealth of new material on a subject about which many people feel there is not much more to say.

**You also mention 'archive material'. What archive sources do you use?**

Firstly, thanks to the database held by the National Register of Archives, I have endeavoured to locate and examine the papers of every senior British officer in the campaign. Secondly, I have located and examined those papers once held by Gneisenau, the Prussian chief-of-staff, in his private collection. That contains a considerable amount of the correspondence

to Blücher's headquarters in the vital days of the campaign, particularly from Müffling, the Prussian representative in Wellington's headquarters. Finally, I have examined the private papers of Constant Rebeque, the Netherlands chief-of-staff. As far as I can tell, since William Siborne, who wrote 150 years ago, no historian writing on the subject in English has undertaken so much original research, particularly in the Dutch and German archives, and in private papers.

**Are you claiming that the Prussians won the Battle of Waterloo?**

That is not my objective. After all, this book will not be covering the great battle itself; it will only cover as far as Ligny. However, one should not forget that the single largest contingent in Wellington's army were Germans — KGL, Hanoverians, Brunswickers and Nassauers. The role of the German nation in establishing a period of peace and prosperity in Europe has been largely ignored by historians writing in English. I am merely attempting to set the record straight.

**Why are you looking at the issue of the relationship between Wellington and the Prussians?**

In the weeks immediately following the battle, senior Prussian officers made no secret of the fact that they felt they had been let down by Wellington who, they claimed, had promised to support them at Ligny. Wellington claimed he had only made a conditional promise, one due to circumstances beyond his control, he was unable to keep. And so the matter rested until 1852 when a German historian by the name of Ollech, researching the Waterloo Campaign in the Prussian War Archives, discovered a letter written by the Duke of Wellington from Frasnes, near Quatre Bras, at 10.30am on 16 June 1815 that made some very firm promises.

Surprisingly, Wellington appears to have forgotten to keep a copy of this damning document in his records. This set off a controversy at the end of the last century, but one that, due to the First World War, was never brought to a satisfactory conclusion. Having gone through all the original documents I have been able to locate, I believe I am now able to answer that question.

**The question being?**

Whether the Duke of Wellington deceived the Prussians into fighting a battle at Ligny on 16 June 1815 in unfavourable circumstances by leading them to believe that the Anglo-Dutch-German army would be able to support them that day. Building on the Frasnes letter, I show that he fooled Müffling into sending misleading information to Blücher, misinformed the Prince of Orange and Constant Rebeque of his intentions, and removed certain



Author Peter Hofschröder

compromising documents from his records. In addition, I question the true origins of the main plank of Wellington's defence against these accusations — the so-called 'De Lancey Disposition'. My suspicion is that this document was first written in 1842, long after De Lancey had died.

**Those are very startling accusations. Why would the Duke of Wellington have misled his Allies so much?**

Let us not forget that the Anglo-Prussian alliance was merely a marriage of convenience designed to deal with Napoleon's return to France. One of the main planks of British foreign policy at the time was to limit Prussia's territorial expansion westwards into the vacuum caused by the collapse of the Napoleonic Empire. The Duke of Wellington was one of the leading lights in the anti-Prussian party; he once described the Prussians as 'mine enemy'. Let us also not forget that on hearing the news of the outbreak of hostilities, Wellington hesitated, losing a vital day. On 16 June, his army was still in the process of concentrating, and he needed another twenty-four hours to do so. Thus, the French advance had to be delayed, and only the Prussians could do this. He could not ask "mine enemy" to put themselves out on a limb for his sake, so he led the Prussians to believe that the concentration of his own forces was running according to plan, and that both allied armies could unit that day. He left the Prussians to bear the brunt of Napoleon's aggression to regain the twenty-four hours his earlier error of judgement had lost. Later, in view of the poor relations between the British and Prussian governments, he could not allow his deceit to become public, so certain documents were not included in his published 'Dispatches'. Wellington was simply a most astute politician who used the forces of a rival power for military, political and personal gain. He was, after all, in his day, the leading representative of 'Perfidious Albion'.



# Fast Knights

At Hastings, it was Harold who was the villain, not William. Harold was leading a coup d'état against William's rightful claim and the battle of 1066 was more a civil war than an invasion.

ROBERT NOTT talks to STUART ASQUITH, editor of *Practical Wargamer*, about his fresh views of a classic encounter.



Stuart Asquith confesses it was so long ago that he doesn't really remember when he became interested in military matters. This may seem strange for the editor of *Practical Wargamer* magazine but nevertheless it's true. 'I don't know really, I've often pondered this, when did it actually start?' Stuart joined the Royal Regiment of Artillery and after this began work for British Telecom where he stayed for twenty-eight years. His military career may have been the catalyst for his later military interests but again he is unsure, 'Whether things military had always been there or were developed by it I don't know'.

Since retiring from BT five years ago, he has concentrated on his editorial posts at *Regiment* and *Practical Wargamer* magazines along with his writing that includes both historical titles and those devoted to the wargaming hobby. Stuart's first memory of wargaming is far clearer: 'My first wargame that I can remember was Airfix American Civil War, how many times have you heard that before! Because it was the only period that you could get all three arms'. The scarcity of wargame figures had clearly played a part, but by then manufacturers

such as Frank Hinchcliffe, Hinton Hunt and Alberken had started to produce figures for the expanding market. 'There wasn't much around and then I remember Frank Hinchcliffe made some figures, these days they may be laughable, but they took the market by storm and I'm afraid this boy was lost!'

From an early age, Stuart maintains that he was not obsessed with wargaming and military history, 'I had lots and lots of toy soldiers as a boy but I also had train sets, don't forget that then boys played with toy soldiers and girls played with dolls - this is what you did, and I was quite happy to go and play football as well'. However, Stuart also points out that along with a lack of figures there was also a relative scarcity of interesting literature covering military history, something that obviously affected the development of the wargaming hobby in the early years. 'The hobby books just weren't there either, the first proper book I remember was Terry Wise's *Introduction to Battlegaming* and then there was Don Featherstone's *Wargames*'. The lack of interest in the military was undoubtedly a

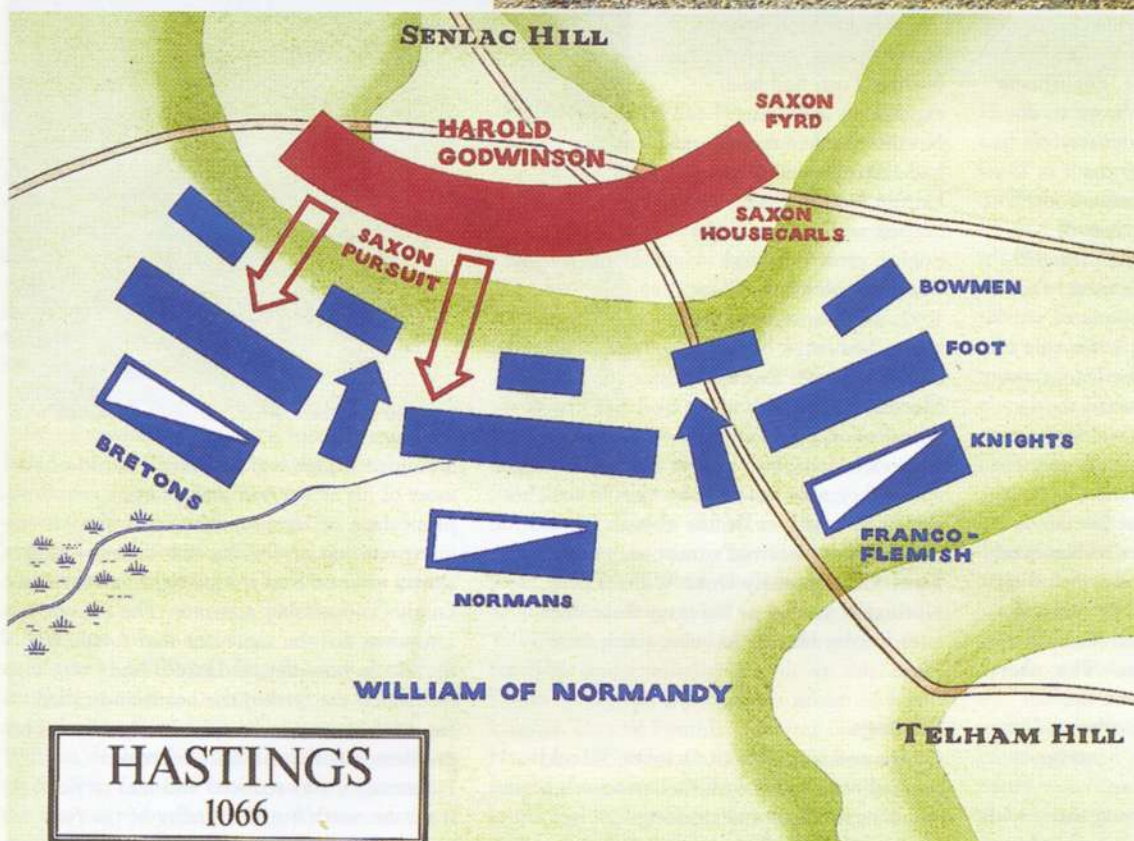
**The finest infantry in the world. Armoured in heavy chainmail and wielding fearsome two handed axes, the Saxon Housecarles were highly feared troops. With large shields to form a wall in front of them arrows could do little damage at long range and when the Norman foot closed to contact, their armour could not stand up to the vicious onslaught of Harold's household troops.**

product of the immediate post war era. 'It was a different world, more austere and war weary. Although manufacturers were making cowboys and Indians and knights in armour they weren't making men with machine guns in camouflage, I think it was just too painful'. The lack of published material and his growing awareness of military history turned Stuart to investigate what would become his first real wargaming passion, the English Civil War. 'It appealed to me because it was local, I could get in the car and go to Naseby or Marston Moor. I've always liked local history'.

The reality of war and the importance of battles as a part of real history that one can



Right: Norman knights on the advance, although the term knight can only be loosely attributed to William's mounted force. Whilst organised, heavily armoured and used to fighting on horseback, the knights used spears or javelins as their primary weapon. There is still debate as to whether they used their spears as jabbing weapons or couched as lances but nevertheless their use as a shock weapon against a broken line or in pursuit after the battle ensured that few in Harold's army escaped. The characteristic lozenge shield shown was synonymous with Norman cavalry, others tended to use a mixture of Norman style and more conventional round shields.



Left: The Battle of Hastings was fought on 14th October 1066. Harold's position on the ridge was dictated by William's immediate advance and the inferiority of Saxon numbers. Although the Saxon position was strong, successive repulses of first Breton and then Norman attacks led a large proportion of Harold's force to run down the hill and become separated, cut off and wiped out. This weakened the Saxon force still holding the hill such that they could no longer hold the ridge. What followed was a desperate last stand around the wounded King but eventually they were outflanked and overwhelmed.

see and actually visit in person rather than read about in literature are central to Stuart's interest in military history, a key factor in his choice of the Battle of Hastings. He is also vehemently opposed to the compartmentalisation of military history and wargaming into fashionable and 'respectable' periods and their associated wargame methods and scales. 'It doesn't matter if you do Ancients in 6mm or the Napoleonic period in 25mm we are both wargaming and recreating military history'. Stuart is also wary that the love of military history and its associated wargaming pastime can become all-consuming and that there are other things in life than wargaming. Stuart disagrees however with the desire to recreate battles in minute historical detail and so believe them to be 100% accurate representations of the

real events. 'The rules are the key with the figures becoming secondary. The ideas and the concepts are the really important issues. Unfortunately you can't be realistic in a wargame room in comfortable surroundings against someone who is a friend of yours. It is enjoyable, it's fun and can be exciting and frustrating, but it is only a game.' Despite these limitations Stuart confesses that he will never stop wargaming. 'There are so many periods and so many facets to it that I don't think I'll ever get fed up with wargaming'.

One facet of the wargaming hobby that does provoke Stuart's ire is its introverted nature, especially in the respect of making it more accessible. The wargaming conventions that are held throughout the year are virtually the only place that wargames can be seen, 'Why are we putting on wargames at

war game shows? Surely it would be better to put on games where there are no wargames and try and bring other people into the hobby, such as at the Napoleonic Fair and the Model Engineer Exhibition instead of preaching to the converted.'

### Coup d'etat

Without doubt the battle of Hastings in 1066 is the most famous event in British military history. Its fascination for Stuart comes not only from its general fame but also from its politico-military significance, its accessibility and from its very 'Englishness'. 'The battle of Hastings was in some ways a precursor of the English Civil War. It is an English battle which you can get to fairly easily and walk it easily and when you are there you can feel it. As a military event it's relatively simple,



there are very few troop types, arguably three on the Norman side and two on the Saxon side, it's uncomplicated and absolutely climactic, changing our history like nothing before or since'. Such is the fame of Hastings and the events leading up to it that it would be reasonable to assume that the facts would be straightforward and that a consensus would have emerged over the events of that climactic year. This is not the case, for controversy and disagreement abound over the nature of battle as well as the diplomatic and political causes for the campaign.

The events of 1066 unfolded because of a succession crisis following the death of Edward the Confessor who had reigned for 24 years from 1042. The problem was the lack of a direct heir, even more complicated by the entwined nature of the royal houses of the Normans and the West Saxons. It is somewhat difficult to judge the 'Englishness' of the participants as some are wont to do, ever eager to see the 'English' dynasty of Edward and Harold invaded by the 'Norman' William. This is because both houses were linked by the marriage of Ethelred the Unready, who ruled from 979-1016, to Emma, daughter of Richard I Duke of Normandy (William the Conqueror's great-grandfather). After 1017, when rule of England passed to Canute of the Danes, the sons of Ethelred, including Edward the Confessor, lived in Normandy and it was there that the Saxon claim to the throne was supported. In 1042, when Edward was invited back to England and the line of Wessex restored, the closest ties to him were the Norman branch of the family, including his cousin's son Duke William. By 1051, the childless Edward had designated William as his heir to the throne of England. The other key participants in the crisis were the Godwin clan, especially Earl Godwin's son Harold. The Godwins did not, however, have any royal lineage, rather an opportunistic knack of supporting those with influence. 'The Godwin family,' concludes Stuart, had worked their way in rather well with Harold rising from being a minor Earl to the most powerful man in the land.' Godwin himself had been a pivotal supporter of Canute and by 1053 their influence over Edward the Confessor was such that Harold was Earl of Wessex, and his brothers Gyrth, Leofwine and Tosti the Earls of East Anglia, Middlesex and Northumberland. Without doubt the Godwins were the most powerful and dominant force in England. This alarmed William despite the fateful shipwreck that had deposited Harold in Normandy in 1064 and which led to the oath of support by Harold to William's claim. After the death of Edward on 5th January 1066, Earl Harold was crowned king the very next day in an efficient *coup d'etat* that provoked William to prepare an invasion fleet.

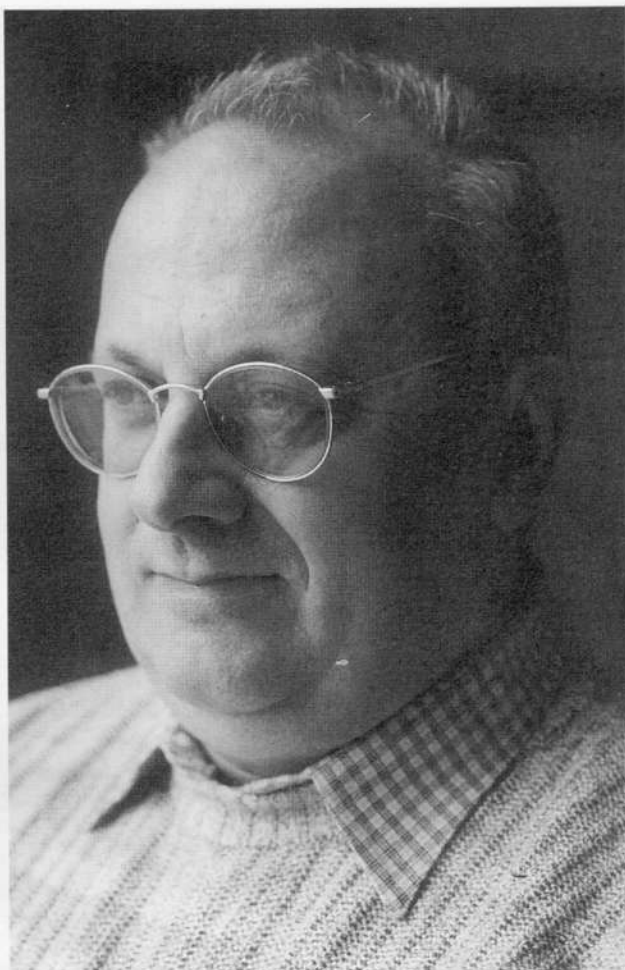
**Right: Stuart Asquith, Editor of Practical Wargamer magazine. The Battle of Hastings represents a truly 'English' encounter that inspires Stuart in the same manner as the English Civil War. It is easy to see the battlefield today and imagine the events that took place in October 1066. For Stuart the reality of warfare and the ability to see the location in person and experience the conditions are as important as the historical events themselves, something that is lost to many battles of other periods.**

The prospect of a Norman invasion was not Harold's only worry, for his brother Tosti had been expelled by his Northumbrian subjects and had allied himself to King Harold Hardrada of Norway, himself with claims to the English crown through Canute's rule from 1017-1042. The Norsemen landed before William's Normans but were fought first by Earl Morcar at Gate Fulford outside York, when they were victorious, and then at Stamford Bridge, where they were defeated by Harold on 25th September with the deaths of both Harold Hardrada and Harold's traitorous brother Tosti. Unfortunately Duke William of Normandy landed at Pevensey three days later forcing Harold to move south once more.

### Hastings

On the morning of 14th October, Harold reached Senlac Hill with the intention of attacking William and catching him by surprise. Exactly the opposite occurred and William moved to attack before the English had deployed properly. 'William had to have a quick victory,' believes Stuart, 'to hold the barons together otherwise they would do their own thing and his army would dissipate.'

A lot of controversy exists as to the composition of the respective armies at Hastings, especially that of Harold's Saxons. The traditional view is one of a core contingent of Housecarles and Danish mercenaries, heavily armoured men in mail wielding two-handed axes, supported by the *fyrð* or levy. This is a little simplistic as the *fyrð* itself was divided up into the select *fyrð* and general *fyrð*. The former were armoured to some extent and carried spears and swords whilst the latter were the unarmoured poorly armed levies of tradition. The battles of Gate Fulford and



Stamford Bridge had deprived Harold of most of his select *fyrð* and a large proportion of Housecarles and so the interpretation on the Bayeux Tapestry that shows unarmoured troops fighting Norman knights is probably accurate. The Saxon army was not the same one that fought in the north, however, as Harold had disbanded the *fyrð* in the north and called for a fresh army to be raised in London. The problem was that his core force of Housecarles was reduced and had to ride from the north but the quality of the *fyrð* raised in the south was far poorer. 'The Housecarles were part of the army from the north but they would have ridden - they were the original dragoons as they just got off their horses to fight. It was rather the numbers of the Housecarles rather than their state that hampered Harold as he could not replace them because they were the household troops.' Therefore Harold was at a significant disadvantage, not only outnumbered but also forced to give battle before he was ready. His only option was to form a defensive 'shield wall' and wait for the Norman attack. For Stuart this must have been the most terrifying moment of the battle: 'When you stand there it is really atmospheric, you can see Telham Hill and I would not have liked to stand there with my spear and see that lot coming towards me!'

William's army has been better documented and has been heralded as a new





**Above:** After pursuing the retreating Bretons, the Housecarles and fyrd were helpless against the fresh Norman cavalry that surrounded them. Bishop Odo of Bayeux, Duke William's brother and two knights finish off a last stand of Housecarles. The rash chases down the hill cost Harold dearly not just in terms of badly needed troops but personally, both his brothers Gyrth and Leofwine perished after pursuing the retreating Bretons.

form of warfare in the Dark Ages. It was based around the knight, heavily armed and armoured using a spear but more importantly trained to act together and responding to orders given by flags, in a sense 'modern' cavalry. 'There is still a great controversy over the way that the Norman knights used their spears or javelins' either over arm as a jabbing weapon or underarm couched as a lance. Most wargame manufacturers actually make both styles!' William deployed in three sections: Bretons on the left, Franco-Flemish on the right and the Normans, by far his largest force, in the centre. Each section was arranged with a mass of foot, similar in style to the Saxon Housecarles, and behind them a mounted force of knights covered from the front by ranks of archers. Contrary to some opinion the Normans did not employ crossbowmen, 'I do not believe they had crossbows as there are no crossbows depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry — I believe it's a translational error, although they certainly had conventional bow armed troops.'

William's plan was a simple one but by Feudal standards well thought out, his archers would soften up the Saxon line, followed by an assault by the heavy infantry to break the line, culminating in a cavalry attack by the armoured knights which would exploit the gaps and eliminate all resistance. Unfortunately for William his plan did not go well as his archers failed to shake the shield wall and his heavy infantry received a

severe check from the Housecarles double-handed axes and were forced to fall back. On William's left the Breton contingent fared worst and fled, causing a portion of the Saxon right wing to chase them in pursuit. However, the pursuers were cut off by William's Norman cavalry and eliminated, including not just the *fyrð* but a sizeable group of Housecarles led by Gyrth and Leofwine, the king's brothers. Nevertheless the Saxon line held ready to face an advance by William's main force of knights. Again after beating back this new attack, part of the Saxon line chased the retreating horsemen and were cut off and wiped out. At this point the Saxon line was now too weak to hold the ridge and formed a crescent around the hilltop. This weakening allowed William to gain a foothold on the edges of the ridge and gradually wear down the Saxon resistance. Eventually a group of four knights, Guy of Ponthieu, Waltar Giffard, Hugh de Montfort and Eustace of Boulogne fought their way to Harold and brutally killed him after which the Saxon line disintegrated. Apart from a brief stand by a rearguard group at Malfosse the battle was over and Saxon rule came to an end. The nature of feudal warfare is often lost on the modern reader: 'We can only imagine what the wounds caused by the doublehanded axes would have been like. I certainly have little concept of the horrific nature of Feudal warfare.'

#### Questions

The Battle of Hastings gives Stuart two questions, could Harold have won and how much truth is there in the infamous legend of Harold's eye wound. The chances of Harold winning were evenly balanced, believes Stuart, 'I think Harold could have won. With more *fyrð* arriving all the time and holding on to the flanks he could have kept going all day, but then what would happen the next day? After all what was

Housecarles where he was expected to be, and he had his brothers with him.' This leads to the question of Harold's wound and its effect on the battle. The depiction in the Bayeux Tapestry is held mostly to blame as it's inscription of '*Harold Rex Interfectus Est*' is crammed in between a Housecarl reeling from an arrow wound in the head and a similar figure being dispatched by mounted Norman knight. As occurs elsewhere in the tapestry, the most likely interpretation is of Harold's wounding during the final advance by William's forces against the almost surrounded hilltop and of his end at the hands of the Norman knights. This does suggest that Harold's wound came after the disastrous pursuits that cost the Saxons a substantial part of their strength, as well as the death of the King's brothers and so points to the conclusion that Harold was incapable of preventing them as he was 'probably fighting in the front line of Housecarles. The commander in a feudal battle was limited in his command options and certainly in a defensive position and outnumbered, Harold's place was in the front line as a charismatic leader. 'Harold was surrounded by the Housecarles which were the best soldiers in Europe at that time, but they just lacked the numbers whereas William's forces were equally mailed and shielded and in the end there were just more of them.'

As a battle, Hastings holds a unique place in military history not only for its long term importance but as a record of feudal warfare. It is the ultimate cataclysmic end to a romantic, if violent story of kingship, oaths, usurpship and dreadful conflict. The Saxons were left weakened by hard won and hard lost battles and their leadership had been decimated. Although William had a hard task to hold on to his new acquisition there was no real threat of him losing his grip on the English throne. Such battles as decisive as Hastings do not come often●

there against the Normans? There was no time-critical factor that affected them and they were living off the land, in fact William deliberately laid waste to the surrounding area to attract Harold to him.' Stuart feels that Harold also had the confidence to win: 'Sometimes you get the man for the hour, and I think Harold was. He was in the front row of the



# Punch-up or Restraint?

Recently, a drunken member of the public assaulted a group of re-enactors. Rather than strike back with their swords and maces, the medieval re-enactors retreated and the media dubbed it an ignominious defeat, but did they do the right thing? PHILIPP J. C. ELLIOT-WRIGHT confronts the audiences that get out of hand.



Be it battle re-enactment or living history, although much less stress is rightly laid upon bringing history to life and offering the audience an insight into the past, a degree of entertainment is also necessary if their attention is to be held. It is easy to identify a display that has failed to hold the public's attention: people just walk away half way through. At that point the society in question has failed in its primary objective of conveying any aspect of history at all, other than to possibly re-enforce many people's memories of history at school as boring. In

the September 97 edition of *Military Illustrated* I discussed the question of what is appropriate to recreate in re-enactment, essentially, good taste. However, there is another dynamic to the relationship between historical group and its audience, that is safety and the public's endless attempts to get the ultimate view of a display, sometimes down the barrel of a loaded weapon. Battle re-enactment and living history each present their own dangers of stupid people endangering both themselves and the re-enactor.

**Above: War of the Roses re-enactors such as these have recently had to face members of the public who consider it fun to pick a fight with them.**

Whether its twenty-five soldiers recreating a skirmish line or 2,000 enacting something considerably larger, ensuring neither participant nor audience is injured is of primary concern. Members of societies are normally fully aware of potential dangers, the mixture of military hierarchy, drill and



training ensuring the potential for injury is small. Viking warriors and Norman knights are keenly aware that the spears and swords they wield may be blunt but are still metal and hurt if swung with any malice. Soldiers of the gunpowder age know that even blank charges have great force at close range. The problem is that the public, especially cameramen, seem to conceive that it is like a television programme and that none of this can leap out at them and bite.

In an attempt to ensure the audience stays at a safe distance, all battle re-enactments are double roped, with several yards between them. Despite signs warning against crossing this space, people of all ages insist upon crossing them. Young children regularly crawl under but they are easy to chase back, their adult compatriots, particularly if they hold a camera can be more difficult. It seems that today's generation believe they have an inalienable right to a 'clear' view. One of the most dramatic examples of this occurred at a Napoleonic re-enactment in Germany several years ago. The firefight was in full swing and an officer commanding a body of French troops had just ordered his men to cock their muskets and was drawing breath so as to utter the command 'fire' when a smiling face popped-up inches from the muzzles with

his camera to the fore. He was seriously expecting to click his camera at the word of command so he would have the ultimate shot of the flame leaping up the barrel. He apparently had no conception of the price he would have paid for his 'unique' picture. Needless to say, the command was not enunciated, but many oaths were and the individual in question was physically 'guided' to safety. Explosive ground charges equally seem to hold potentially fatal fascination. Despite clear warnings not to approach these, I have had to forcibly remove a cameraman who was sitting next to one, awaiting detonation, for yet another of the 'special' shots.

Medieval displays offer members of the audience just as many opportunities for stupidity. As warriors and knights swing swords, axes and maces believing the public to be many yards away, they can suddenly find a so-called adult seeking that special perspective. Equally they pick up steel weapons and swing them round as if toys, that is until they hit someone. Ironically, at a recent event an individual grabbed a mace from the field and began swinging it. Not appreciating its weight he swung it like a sling shot around his head. He promptly found himself being spun by the forces of

of the land rightly requires that food made available for public consumption is prepared in highly hygienic conditions. This does not apply if the food is only to be consumed by the participants. Consequently, food on living history sites is specifically not for public consumption and requests from an audience to try it are politely, yet firmly, rejected. However, its public display proves too much of a temptation for some. An added frisson of this is the somewhat alternate palates of the past. The greedy consumers can have the delightful surprise of discovering delicacies combining beef and marshmallow or fish and chocolate. I once witnessed a middle-aged member of an audience blandly ignore warnings not to eat food at a re-created 18th century meal, reach over a participant's shoulder, grab a chocolate fish and promptly spit it out over the participant. Not only did this charming individual not apologise, she had the temerity to complain to the organiser that such food, unpalatable to the modern taste buds, should not be put in temptation's way.

Occasionally the threat posed by a member of the public can become a directly physical one. The irony is that if assaulted by the public, the re-enactor must not react given they possess potentially lethal weapons. Recently an inebriated individual decided to pick a fight with a group from the War of the Roses period at a display in a Welsh castle. After the actual historical display was over, this drunk twice assaulted members of the group who, with great restraint and good judgement, took the blows and retreated into the castle, calling the police to deal with the situation. Although the thug received a prison sentence of six weeks, the national papers subsequently carried articles extolling his violence whilst characterising the re-enactors as cowards for not reacting! Having praised the lout for having '..... single-handedly routed both armies.... the dispirited troops beat a hasty retreat into the castle....' they concluded by describing it as '.... the most ignominious defeat on our native soil since Hastings'. One is left to wonder what the report would have been if even a single one of the re-enactors had turned round whilst being assaulted and used an axe, sword, mace, or any other 'historic' implement to defend themselves?

In a sense, re-enactors can be victims of their own success. Their hobby is perceived rightly as historic entertainment for the public which, if done well can convey a flavour of the past's reality. However, this seems to blind some to the fact that whilst it is recreation, it is done so with real artefacts, not plastic imitations and the training and warnings are there for a reason●



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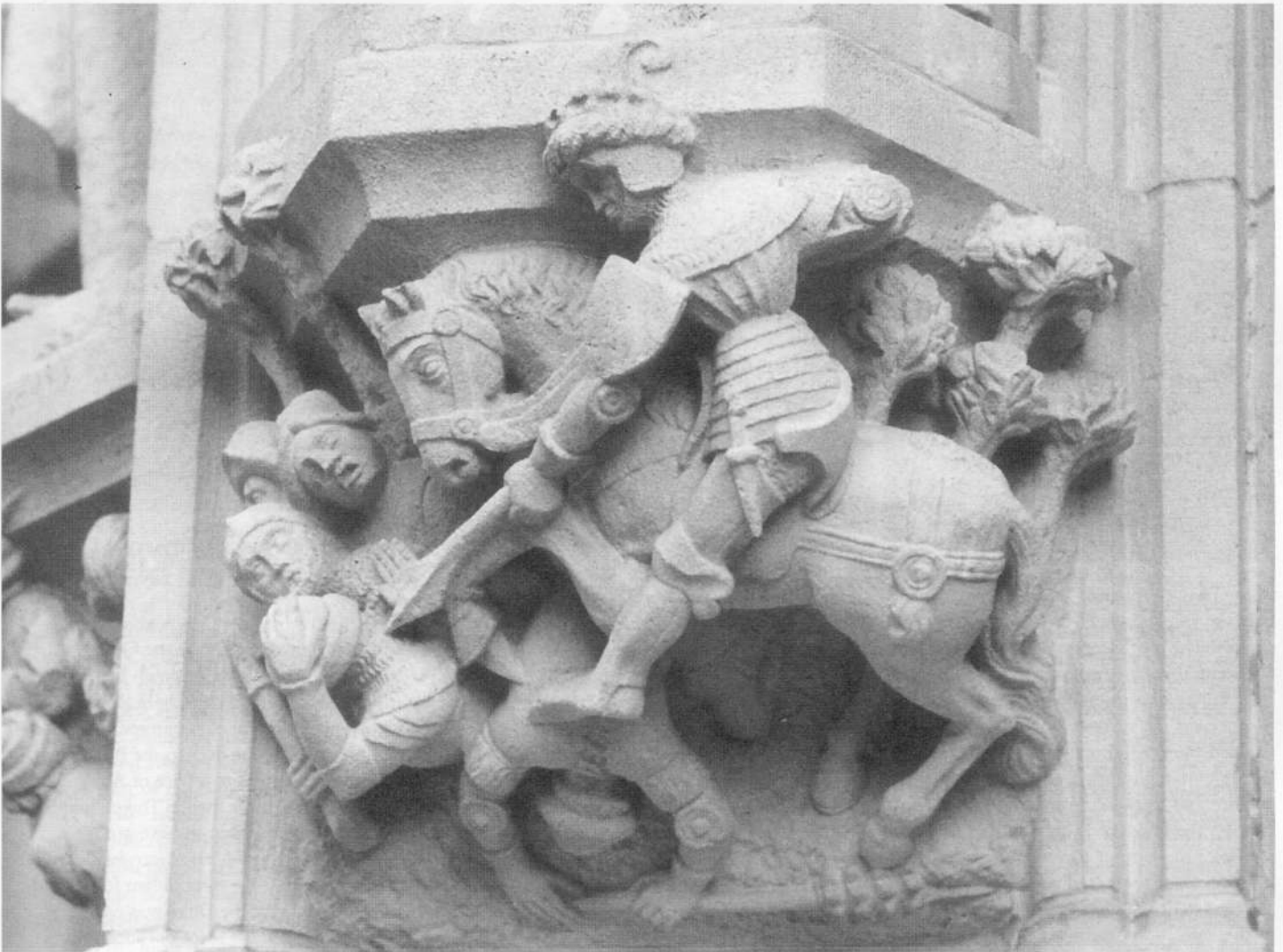
Newtonian physics and ended up smashing it into himself, fortunately with no serious injury other than to his ego.

Living history displays present their own special delights for the insistent hands-on public. Because living history is by definition "open", everything is within reach. Medical scalpels are picked up and their blades tested to see if they are sharp, kettles on fires are touched to see if they are really hot and needles are pushed into fingers to discover if the points are what they appear. They then often complain as they draw their own blood that these articles really are just what they appear to be. Food equally offers an irresistible temptation. The law



# Duke's Brush with Death

When the Duke of Burgundy rode out to crush rebels from Gent, he was confident of victory, but as his horse charged after the retreating rebels, he suddenly found himself surrounded by the enemy... DAVID NICOLLE describes the action and reconstructs the campaign.



Today Bertrandon de la Broquière is best known for his travels around the Middle East and the Balkans in 1432-33 (Burgundian Warrior in the East, MI 74). But during his lifetime Bertrandon had another claim to fame — his courage and loyalty to the Duke of Burgundy twenty years later at the battle of Gavere on 23rd July 1453. This was a relatively minor engagement which has been overshadowed by greater events that same year, the most dramatic of which was the fall of Constantinople (Istanbul) two months before the battle of Gavere. Paradoxically

Bertrandon de la Broquière's descriptions of the Byzantine Greeks and their Ottoman Turkish foes were amongst the most observant in the years immediately before the end of the Byzantine Empire.

Back in western Europe, the war which broke out between Duke Philip the Good of Burgundy and Gent, the richest city in his domain, resulted from a long-running dispute. For over a century the wealthy, mercantile industrial towns of Flanders had been trouble spots for the Duchy of Burgundy which itself lay between the

**Above: A mounted prince defeating infantrymen in a carving on the outside of the Hôtel de Ville at Leuven in Brabant, in what is now central Belgium. It may, in fact, represent Duke Philip the Good of Burgundy defeating the rebellious Genters since the building designed by Mathieu de Layens was erected during his reign.**

Kingdom of France and the German Empire. Problems in Gent were, however, worse than elsewhere and proved a serious threat to the prosperity and stability of the Burgundian



Right: The carvings on the Hôtel de Ville in Leuven include an attack on a city representing some Biblical event but naturally shown in terms of a mid-15th century siege. The variety of arms and armour used by these ordinary infantry soldiers is quite remarkable.

Below: Another carving on the Hôtel de Ville in Leuven shows mid-15th century foot soldiers armed with a crossbow and a longbow attacking a fortification defended by men with seemingly primitive slings.



Right: A massacre after a battle as illustrated in the *Histoire de Charles Martel*, French. c.1470 (Bib. Royale, Cod. 8, f.42, Brussels).



state. They culminated in a brief war between the Duke and the 'revolutionary government' of that city.

Gent already enjoyed many privileges, a high degree of autonomy and considerable power over the surrounding territory. This enabled the revolutionary government to fortify outlying towns and villages as a line of defence and to protect its own supplies. For his part the Duke of Burgundy's strategy was to retake these outer towns and castles, thus severing Gent's supply lines.

By 1453 the Burgundians had seized most of these positions and were aiming for the last remaining stronghold of Gavere next to the river Schelde, about sixteen kilometres south of Gent. Also known as Gaver, the village's name originally meant a 'grassy area next to a river that flooded annually'. The settlement stood on a small hill which was one of a chain of low hills overlooking the east bank of the river. Just north of Gavere was the narrow wooded valley of the Leebeek stream, while between the village of Gavere and the river Schelde stood the castle of Gavere.

Like the rest of the little-known war of 1453, the events preceding and during the

battle of Gavere are remarkably well documented. The Burgundians were already in a bloodthirsty mood following the death of one of their senior captains, Jacques de Lalaing who had been cut to pieces by no less than twenty bullets shot from *veuglaires* during the previous siege of the Gentish castle of Poucques. The top of his head had been blown off by these weapons which were light cannon often mounted on a platform to cover a breach in a fortified wall. Gavere was meanwhile commanded by Arnold Van Speck (or Van der Speeten, head of Gent's guild of masons) with Jean Dubois as his lieutenant. A large part of the garrison also consisted of English mercenaries under John Fox.

The siege began on 16th July and a ferocious bombardment erupted two days later. Hard pressed, Van Speck persuaded his men to ask for good surrender terms. But after meeting Duke Philip of Burgundy in his camp, Van Speck returned to the castle to warn his men that Philip was inflexible and threatened to kill them all unless they were saved by an army from Gent. During the night of 22nd July Arnold Van Speck and about fifteen of his officers, including Jean Van den Bossche, John Fox and some other Englishmen, put Burgundian Crosses of St. Andrew on their clothes. By using the

password "Burgundy", they slipped through the Burgundian siege-lines and rode to Gent for help.

It seems that John Fox had, in fact, already arranged to betray the Genters because he himself felt let down by their lack of support. He had probably made contact with John Fallot, an old comrade in arms who had previously gone over to the Burgundians. Fallot had entered the service of Antoine de Bourgogne who was then in Duke Philip's camp. John Fox is said to have promised to lure the main Gentish army into battle by telling them that the Burgundian forces had scattered and that the Duke was only protected by a small force outside Gavere.

Arnold Van Speck, John Fox and the others reached Gent around 5 o'clock on the morning of 23rd July. There they found support from two other English mercenary captains who argued strongly in favour of an immediate attack upon the Duke's camp. Consequently a very large force was mustered, even priests and monks taking up arms in defence of their city, and around 30,000 men set out to relieve Gavere. This force was led by John Fox, another Englishman named John Hunt, and a small unit of some two hundred English cavalry men-at-arms.





Left: Greeks and Trojans fighting on foot in a rather primitive mid-15th century manuscript, probably made in Flanders or a neighbouring area (*Legend of Troy*, Ms. 9240, f.58r, Bib. Royale, Brussels).

Below: The commander of an army and his men-at-arms emerging from a city gate in a primitive mid-15th century manuscript area (*Legend of Troy*, Ms. 9240, f.23r, Bib. Royale, Brussels).



Meanwhile the remaining defenders of Gavere had surrendered to the Burgundian Count of Etampes at about 8 o'clock in the morning. The Count probably offered them safety but was overruled by the Duke who ordered every man to be hanged. Between twenty-eight and thirty defenders, including some of the remaining English, were strung up on a gibbet which had been erected between two forked trees within sight of the castle before the surrender. These executions were interrupted around 11 o'clock by news that a Gentish army had been seen by Burgundian scouts, approaching along the east bank of the river Schelde which was an unexpected route since the normal road ran over the hills behind Gavere.

The Burgundians armed themselves and sent out patrols to skirmish with the enemy while the Duke drew up his main force with its vanguard near the original camp. They then advanced along the road to Gent, towards a wood where there was a church. A substantial part of the Burgundian army was, however, left at Gavere to guard the surviving prisoners. When the two armies met, the English mercenary John Fox and his men rode up to Burgundian units from Picardy and shouted to Simon de Lalaing who was at the head of the Duke's heralds and was perhaps related to the officer killed at Pouques; 'I have brought the Ginters as I promised you; take me to the Duke of Burgundy because I am his servant and am on his side.' He was then escorted to the Duke by two guards. Meanwhile the Gentish army assembled within the wood with only its front ranks ahead of the trees. They consisted of the best infantry armed with pikes as a defence against Burgundian cavalry. The right flank was anchored on the bank of the Schelde, both this and the Gentish left flank being protected by field artillery guarded by infantry armed with axes, swords and heavy

war-hammers. Behind the pikemen was the Gentish cavalry under Jean de Nivelles, and included those English who had not deserted to the enemy. A very strong rearguard consisting of older men and less well equipped troops from rural areas and from the Waes area lay hidden deeper amongst the trees. Meanwhile the baggage waggons were further to the rear.

The centre of the Burgundian army consisted of troops from Picardy and Artois under the Duke's own command. With him were some of his oldest and most experienced advisors who had fought in Flanders before and knew their enemy. The Gentish front line now advanced cautiously in three steps, moving up and firing its light cannon, *ribaudequins* and *culverins*, each move while the infantry also shot at the Burgundians with crossbows and longbows. But most of the Ginters remained within the shelter of the wood. According to the French historian Plancher, the Marshal of Burgundy who was in command of the vanguard ordered his men to retire out of range when he saw the Ginters bringing up their guns. The Ginters now advanced to take the area abandoned by the Burgundians, but in so doing masked the fire of some of their own

Below: Infantry longbowmen skirmishing between their respective armies in a primitive mid-15th century manuscript, perhaps made in Flanders area (*Legend of Troy*, Ms. 9240, f.63v, Bib. Royale, Brussels).



artillery and also exposed themselves to the Duke's archers from Picardy. As a result many Gentish infantry were wounded.

Now the Duke's Picard troops, who were stationed on the road to Gent, struck back, pushing the centre of the Ginters' line downhill towards the river. Since they seem to have advanced too far, the front of the Gentish line was in danger of being encircled by the Burgundian flanks. Meanwhile the Burgundians' own guns, *veuglaires*, *ribaudequins* and *culverins*, also opened fire supported by longbowmen. *Culverins* from the town of Valenciennes were said to have been particularly effective. But the main crisis came when a waggonload of gunpowder caught fire. Mathieu Kerchove, commander of Gent's artillery, yelled a warning fearing that other powder waggons would also catch fire but many in the somewhat nervous Ginters thought this was yet another case of treason. Gentish morale began to crack; increasing numbers of men breaking ranks and fleeing for the safety of the wood.

Cavalry in the vanguard of the Burgundian army, seeing the enemy in increasing disarray, yelled their warcry to further demoralise the Ginters and then charged. At this point the fortunes of battle nearly changed as a result of Duke Philip's over-enthusiasm. When the Burgundian cavalry charged, the Duke also shouted his battlecry '*Notre Dame de Bourgogne*' and spurred his horse against Gentish infantry as it scattered towards the trees and hedges. He was accompanied by his son, standard-bearers and a few men-at-arms but the Duke's own *battle* or division consisting of infantry archers found it impossible to keep up with the horses.





Section of a manuscript illustration of a battle in the Valerius Maximus, *Ancient Institutions*, French 1473 (Brit. Library, Ms. 4374, f.88, London).

As the Duke, heavily armoured and riding a German horse, together with his mounted men-at-arms came out of the far side of the wood they found themselves facing a force numbering between 1,600 and 1,800 Gentish infantry. The latter had gathered in a small field near the river Schelde, enclosed by dikes and hedges. These foot soldiers may have retreated but they were not yet routed and had formed themselves into a strong defensive formation. The Duke and his followers were all mounted and heavily armoured, hemmed in by the dikes and barely able to support one another. Some drew back until their own archers could arrive to disperse the enemy foot soldiers. Nevertheless the fighting remained so fierce that some Genters got close to Duke Philip, one threatening him with a long staff weapon before he was struck down by the Duke. According to Jehan de Cerisy, secretary to the Count of Etampes who was one of the leading Burgundian captains, 'There he broke his lance, and he conducted himself in this affair with great courage, as did those with him.' Others were less flattering about the Duke's behaviour, saying that he; 'abandoned himself to his courage and pursued those who fled without mercy, charging a group who were making a stand but neglecting to check who was coming with him. This foolish was a thing to do for a ruler and commander of the army.'

The Duke's men-at-arms tried to protect him but were themselves attacked by pikes and war-hammers, many of their horses being killed along with some of the men while a great many more were wounded.

Perhaps in an attempt to escape the press the Duke charged on. His horse jumped a ditch and Duke Philip now found himself in an open area where he was again attacked by other Gentish soldiers who wounded his horse. By now the only people still with the Duke were his standard-bearer the Sire de Hautbourdin, Hervé de Meriadec who carried what was described as the army's banner, and Bertrandon de la Broquière the Duke's squire. He carried Philip's personal pennon. At the most dangerous moment it seems that only Bertrandon was close enough to Duke Philip to protect him.

According to Olivier de La Marche in his *Mémoires*, which were a contemporary source; 'He was in this manner surrounded by them all, striking upon his enemies and they upon him so that Bertrandon, seeing the peril that lay all around him, lowered his lance to which the pennon was attached, and digging his spurs into his horse attacked the Genters, shouting out in a loud voice, 'Traitors! Traitors! Would you kill your Prince?' The Genters, all bewildered, recognised the Duke and stopped for a moment in front of his noble person, but the obstinacy which had taken hold of their hearts overruled their reason, and their feelings of respect gave way to their lust for vengeance.' So the attack continued until Duke Philip's horse had nine or ten serious wounds. Meanwhile the standard-bearers raised their banners high to show the Prince was in danger until at last help came from the Count of Charolais, his son and various others who had to fight their way through the enemy and across the ditch on foot.

Meanwhile the bulk of the Gentish army had been dispersed. The Duke now made another mistake, trusting a local guide to lead him back to his camp outside Gavere but being taken by such a circuitous route that there was considerable delay in getting his army organised for a proper pursuit. This

Opposite: Graham Turner's painting depicts Bertrandon de la Broquière fighting with a Gentish militiaman at the battle of Gavere on 23rd July 1453. As one of Duke Philip of Burgundy's most senior squires and standard-bearers, Bertrandon has here been given the best available arms and armour consisting of a visored salet and Italian full plate armour with a partially fluted breastplate. His horse-harness is decorated with numerous enamelled plaques bearing Bertrandon's own coat-of-arms. The design of this is known but unfortunately its colours are not. Meanwhile his infantry opponent, though far less heavily armoured, is nevertheless well equipped as befitted a prosperous citizen from the wealthy Flemish city of Gent.

saved the city from falling immediately after the battle. Nevertheless enemy stragglers were chased almost to the walls of Gent while others tried to escape across the river Schelde where a great number were drowned.

Gent was, in fact, neither occupied nor plundered because Duke Philip realised that it was economically too important to damage. Nevertheless harsh terms were imposed in return for peace, some of which were symbolic and humiliating. For example the two gates through which the Gentish army had marched on its way to the battle of Gavere were closed every Thursday from then on, while another gate through which they had marched to the battle which resulted in the death of Cornille, the Duke's illegitimate brother was permanently walled up.

For Bertrandon de la Broquière the results of the battle of Gavere were happier. He acquired the village of Vieux-Château and its surroundings, valued at 10,000 francs at that time. This lay on the right bank of the river Serein, in rolling country between Dijon and Avallon. Like other landholding lords in this region Bertrandon was encouraged to repopulate an area which, following the Peace of Arras between France and Burgundy, was no longer a wartorn frontier zone. This was the peace which paved the way for final French victory in the Hundred Years War with England●

#### Reference

V. Fris, 'La Bataille de Gavere (23 juillet 1453), ' *Bulletin de la Société d'histoire et d'archéologie de Gand*, XVIII (1910), pp. 185-233, which also has a full, though now somewhat outdated bibliography.

An exhibition of many of Graham Turner's excellent military paintings, including his work for Brassey's and Osprey, will be on display and sale from February 10th to 14th at the Carisbrooke Gallery, 63-79 Seymour Street, London W2 2HF.





GRAHAM TURNER 1999



# Best Dressed Soldier

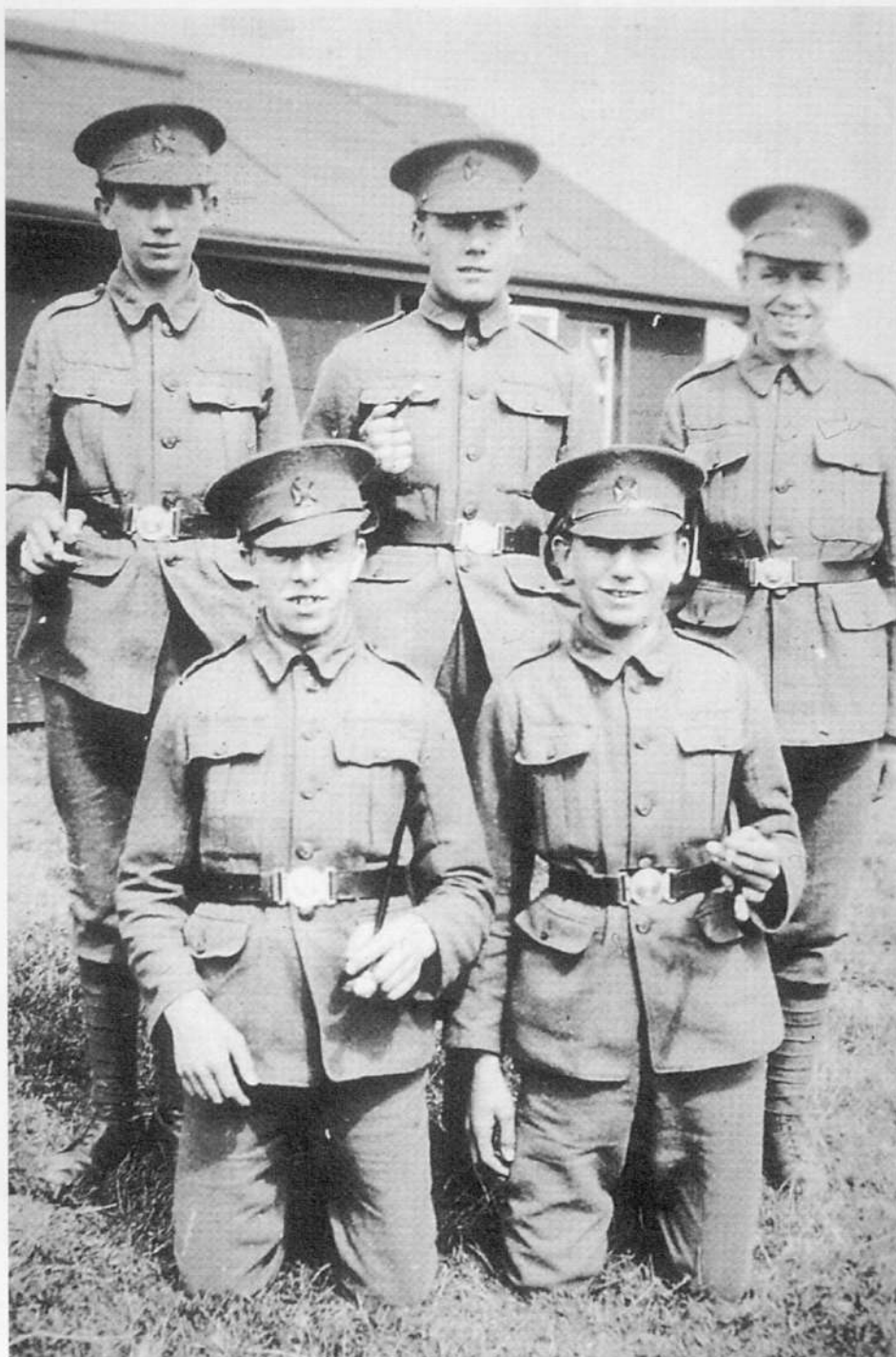
After the practical, loose fitting uniform of World War One, the Service Dress of the inter-war years was one of the smartest worn by the British soldier.

**MARTIN BRAYLEY** follows its development and reconstructs its appearance.

Between 1902 and 1939, the standard uniform of the British Army was the Service Dress, which had been introduced by Army Orders 10, 40, and 251 of 1902. Originally a loose fitting and untidy uniform, epitomised by the image of the World War One Tommy, it was to become, in the inter war years, one of the smartest uniforms ever worn by the British soldier.

As originally introduced in 1902, the tunic had pleated chest pockets, internal lower skirt pockets, rifle patches at the shoulders and removable epaulet straps. In 1904 these were replaced by straps of twisted cord which were themselves replaced by standard epaulet straps in 1907. Until 1907 the units of men wearing SD were identified by a cloth designation stitched at the shoulder but these were replaced in 1907 by brass titles worn at the base of the epaulet strap, these titles had first been authorised for widespread use on the khaki drill uniform introduced in the 1880s. At each waist seam of the tunic was a small brass hook which served as a belt support, they were permanently attached to the tunic.

In 1924 the old loose SD was relegated to working dress and an improved pattern was introduced. This new tunic followed the general styling of the old, differing mainly in its fitting, the new garment was less bulky and had a much improved 'tailored' fit, it also had a slightly improved and higher collar which now bore Regimental collar devices or 'Collar Dogs'. The collar remained unlined, a lining not being deemed necessary until the few tunics still being manufactured had one added to all new production from late 1940. At the same time as the tunic was modified, the SD trousers were re-modelled, now being tailored to a slightly tapered leg with an angled cut to the



ankle cuff making them higher over the front of the foot than the heel. In keeping with the then current fashion, a slightly raised back improved the comfort and fit compared to the straight waist of the earlier pattern. The old SD uniform of the regular army was progressively replaced by the widespread issue of Battledress from the

summer of 1939, however much of the BEF deployed to France and Belgium was wearing the SD and it was still to be seen as late as 1940 during the evacuation from Dunkirk. Khaki SD continued in limited service with some troops, including MPs and bandmen.

The pre WW1 stiff SD cap gave way,





**Left:** The brass shoulder title worn at the base of each shoulder epaulette. Several changes of wording took place but the title 'Royal Berks' was the type worn during the 1930s.

**Opposite:** This 1930 dated image shows a group of young soldiers from the Kings Royal Rifle Corps. In keeping with Rifle Regiment traditions all buttons on the khaki service dress are black and no collar badges are worn. The chinstrap, belt and swagger stick would also have had a black finish with white metal fittings.



**Below:** These two young lads from the Royal Wiltshire Regiment (which was amalgamated with the Royal Berkshire Regiment in 1959) were photographed during their summer camp. Despite being under canvas the cleaning of their 08 web equipment has taken a high priority and all uniform brasses are highly polished.

putties entirely until the 1980s, over forty years after many other nations had adopted a high leg combat boot.

The 08 webbing continued in service throughout this period, but minus the E-tool, helve and their associated web carriers, which had been declared obsolete shortly after WW1, seemingly deemed unnecessary in a modern and increasingly

mechanised army. The old Mk1 'Brodi' helmet also continued in service but with an improved liner and web chinstrap introduced in 1935.



**Left:** This most interesting shot of a member of the Royal Corps of Signals shows a couple of unusual features. Taken in December 1939 it shows the use of the full text 'Royal Corps of Signals' shoulder titles supposedly replaced in 1929 by 'R. Signals', and the leather 1903 pattern bandoleer worn over the left shoulder, an item that saw only very limited use post WW1.

The dreaded putties (from the Hindi 'patti' for cloth/bandage) continued in service. This item probably caused the Tommy more grief than any other piece of issue kit. They had to be wound, bandage like, from the ankle to above the calf, and sufficiently tight to prevent their slipping down. This in itself restricted the circulation of blood to the lower leg and feet, adding considerably to the discomfort both on long route marches and static ceremonial parades. Although discontinued with the introduction of battledress and the new 'Web Anklets' they started to creep back into service during World War Two, particularly in North Africa and the Far East, but in a much shorter ankle height. In these theatres they did have an advantage over the looser fitting 37 pattern web anklets, the tight fit helping to prevent the ingress of sand and insects. The British army were not to get rid of their

### Royal Berkshire Regiment

The history and traditions of individual British units affected the way in which the basic uniform was worn and the embellishments worn upon it. These embellishments and unit traditions varied from Regiment to Regiment, in the case of this study the Royal Berkshire Regiment typifies a 'County' Regiment of the period in question.

The Royal Berkshire Regiment could trace its historical lineage back to 1744 when the 49th Regiment of Foot (Prince Charlotte of Wales's) was raised. In 1881 they were merged with the 66th Regiment of Foot (Berkshire Regiment), which had been raised in 1755. The old 49th became the 1st Battalion Princess Charlotte of Wales's (Berkshire Regiment) whilst the 66th became the 2nd Battalion Princess Charlotte of Wales's (Berkshire Regiment). In 1885, and as a reward for the regiments splendid conduct in the Sudan, at the battle of Tofrek, the regiment was granted the title 'Royal'. From that time they became known as the 'Royal Berkshire Regiment (Princess Charlotte of Wales's).

during the war, to an unwired 'Soft cap' of the same general design. This was a short lived item and the stiff SD cap, in a slightly improved form with larger peak, soon returned to service following the armistice. For most troops this was to be replaced by the universal issue of a khaki field service cap, an old design re-introduced as an integral part of the battledress uniform.

*continued page 28*





Right: Rear view of the 08 equipment showing the waterbottle and haversack. In order to attach the rear cartridge carrier's 'carrier diagonal strap' to the lower corner buckles of the haversack it had to be worn well down the back, not an ideal position. Note that when worn in this manner the top corner attachment buckles were tucked tidily under the top flap. When the (large) pack was worn on the back the haversack was moved to a position on the left side, fixed over the bayonet and suspended by the top corner buckles.



Left: This image of a mid 1930s Terrier (Territorial Army Volunteer) on annual field camp and manoeuvres differs very little from that of a soldier of the Great War period of 1914-18. Despite many minor refinements the most obvious changes are the addition of collar badges and the web strap on the Mk1 helmet. This strap replaced the earlier leather version in 1935. The 08 webbing and SMLE rifle remain virtually unchanged. The peacetime Regular Army and the Territorials prided themselves on their appearance, even in the field webbing still had to be regularly balanced and brasses had to be kept highly polished.

The post WW1 anti-war sentiment led to little cash being available to fund the Regular Army, with the Territorials being under severe financial restraint. The 4th Royal Berkshire's held one summer camp and one battalion exercise annually. The summer camp was attended by all ranks but due to a lack of funds the battalion exercise was carried out WITHOUT the attendance of troops!

Right: During the inter war period the left hand cartridge carriers were frequently worn with the lower pocket flaps turned back on themselves, and with the carrier diagonal strap tucked into the rear of the belt buckle. This was typical of the inter war 'tidly' approach to soldiering ('tidly', military slang for neat and tidy). Regulations dictated that the web frog for the 07 bayonet was worn on the left of the belt immediately behind the rearmost pocket of the cartridge carrier.



Left: The 08 web equipment continued in service with the army until at least 1940, and in the case of the Royal Navy for some time thereafter. The E-tool had been dispensed with after WW1, therefore its web components, the head carrier and helve holder, were no longer worn. The cartridge carriers are of the standard pattern, the Mk1 right hand pouch which remained unchanged, and the Mk11 left hand pouch. The left hand pouch

had originally been a mirror image of the right but it had been found that in a standing fire position, against cover, the pockets tended to come open leading to the loss of ammunition. To rectify this straps were added across the lower three pockets, the modification being introduced into service by List of Changes of 16979 of October 1914.

The single chevron worn on the lower left sleeve is a good conduct badge, signifying at least two years unbroken good conduct. This was not an indication of the soldiers actual service as conduct considered less than good did not count towards qualifying time, additionally badges were often forfeited as a punishment for minor misdemeanours and indiscretions, the badges for some soldiers often acknowledged as being awarded for undetected crime rather than good conduct!



Right: For parade and ceremonial, which took up a good deal of the soldier's time, the 08 web was dispensed with in favour of a white buff leather rifle sling and belt of the 1888 Slade Wallace pattern. The belt was also used for 'Walking Out' and with the addition of a swagger stick or cane the soldier undoubtedly cut a fine figure.



Above: Another item of WWI kit (that had remained virtually unchanged since the middle of the 19th century) was the 'D' shape mess tin. Essentially a good design the rivets holding the folding handle in the lid section were a weak point and often broke. This mess tin was made in 1932 by Corfield Ltd, London, it was normally stored in the pack along with other items of kit that did not need to be with the soldier at all times. These items included the great coat (single breasted), cap comforter, spare socks and underwear, wash and shaving kit, and other necessities.

Note the opened tunic collar which shows the absence of lining fabric, the rough serge being worn against the neck and leading to many cases of abrasion and skin rashes. Under medical authority the individual was allowed to line the collar with a softer less abrasive fabric, from late 1940 all production of SD and BD tunics were to have a lined collar.



Left: The inter war service dress cap worn with brass Royal Berkshire cap badge. The badge, a dragon surmounting the title scroll 'Royal Berkshire', was in honour of the regiments meritorious service in China.





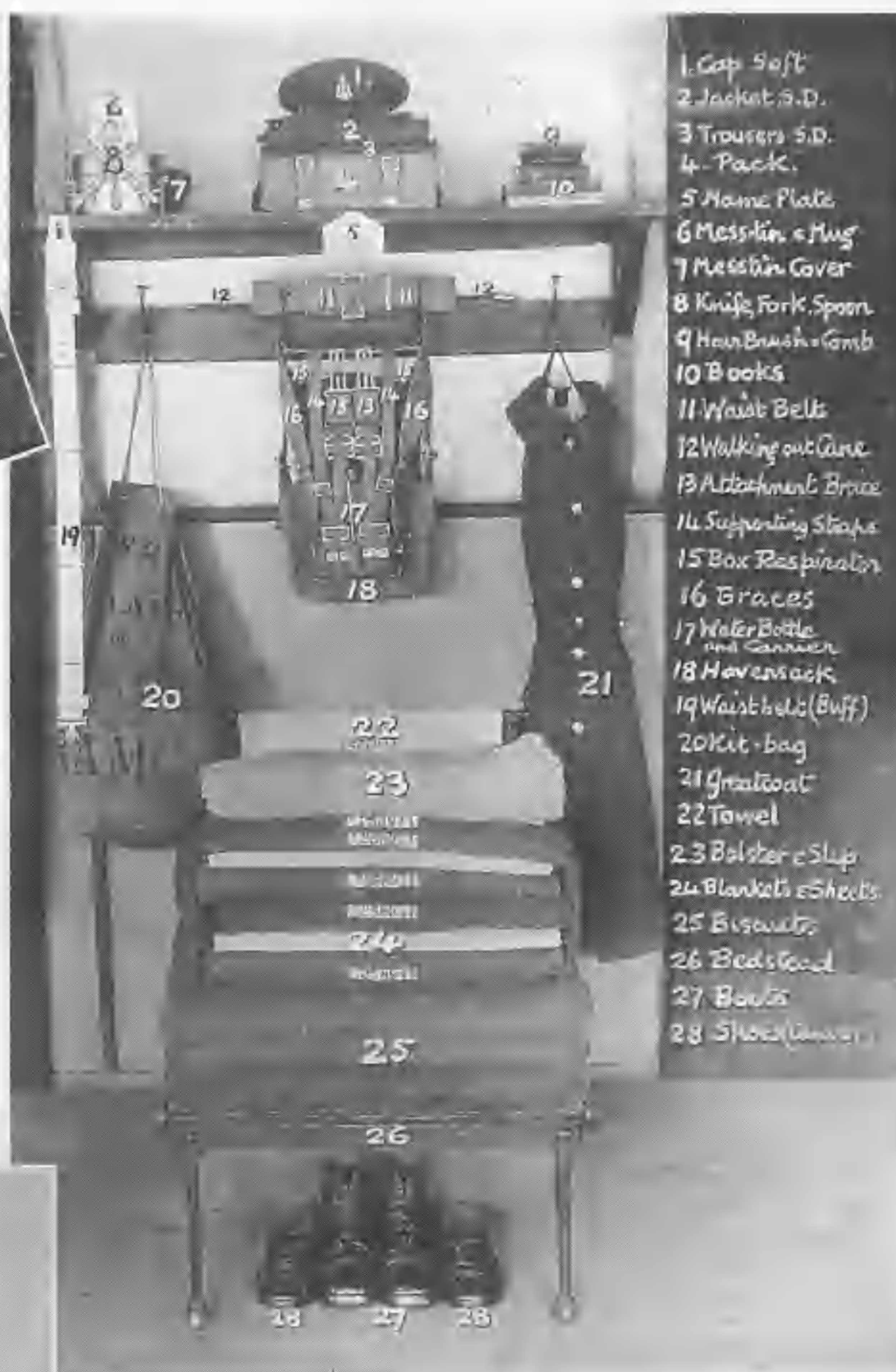
Above: The pre WWII service dress tunic. This example being made in 1937 and issued to the Royal Berkshire Regiment. Unlined, it was internally reinforced with khaki drill material, with internal lower bag pockets of the same fabric and a field dressing pocket inside the lower right front.

Below: The messkins and OB web required continuous maintenance to keep them at the required level of cleanliness. Two of the items available to the soldier to assist in this chore were 'The Soldiers Friend' metal polish and 'Mills equipment Cleaner'. The old issue toothbrush (dated 1936) assisted in the application of both products.



The regimental emblem, a Chinese dragon, had been awarded to the 49th following their service in China between 1840-42 and had been carried over when they had merged with the 66th. From 1898 the regiment's cap badge was a dragon facing to the left and mounted over a scroll bearing the title 'Royal Berkshire'. Between 1924 and 1939 the dragon emblem was worn as a left and right facing pair on the collar points of the khaki service dress. These collar badges

were backed in red cloth, this was an honour dating back to the 49th's service in the American war of Independence when the regiment originally wore a white feather. Following a bloody action, in which sleeping American soldiers were surprised and defeated by units of the 46th and 49th of Foot, and shortly after the battle of 'Brandywine Creek' (September 1777), the Americans promised no quarter to the two regiments. So that the threat of no quarter should not be applied to the whole British army the 46th and 49th dyed their feathers red so that the Americans might easily identify them in battle. In 1934, and in



Above: This photograph shows the daily kit layout, in this case to a private in the RAMC, but typical of the period. This display leaves little doubt about the amount of time and effort required to maintain kit in this fashion. Of particular note are the brace attachments (13) and the single breasted greatcoat (21).

honour of this action, the Army Council authorised the use of a red backing cloth to the badges, an inverted triangle eventually being adopted for the cap badge backing as this closely approximated the shape of the feathers originally worn.

Brass shoulder titles were worn on the khaki service dress uniform, 'R. BERKS' in that year. In 1920 the title was again changed, this time to 'R. BERKSHIRE' but by the mid 1930s it had reverted to the earlier 'ROYAL BERKS'.

During the 1930s the regiment had three Battalions, the 1st and 2nd were regular Battalions and the 4th was a Territorial Battalion (the third Battalion had been disbanded in 1920). In 1936 the strength of





Left: Puttees were a tiresome and restrictive item that were to bedevil the British soldier for over a century, (they were still to be seen in British service during the Falklands War of 1982, albeit of a shorter pattern). The crossover method of binding, adopted by appearance conscious individuals in the Great War, became the Army standard during the post war years with individual regiments varying the number of 'crossovers' employed by their soldiers. Typical of the period is the creased lower edge to the trousers forming a neat line above the puttees, during WW1 the trousers had been allowed to blouse naturally over the top of the puttees.

The toecapped 'Ammo' boots had been introduced in the first half of the 1930s. The reinforced toe section gave protection to the foot, additional thickness at a point subject to scuffing, and an area that could be 'bulled' to a mirror finish! The heel was reinforced with a steel horseshoe plate and the leather sole was fully protected by 25 studs nailed to each boot.

Below: The 'Frog, Buff, Bayonet, G.S., Mark II' was originally intended for use with the P1888 bayonet, this particular example being altered in line with 'List of Changes 16976' to allow its use with the P07 bayonet (with quillon). The modification required the addition of a small 1 1/2" square by

3/16" thick piece of leather being riveted to the inner rear face of the throat of the frog. This held the bayonet quillon away from the front of the frog and prevented it from snagging.

To prevent lateral movement of the bayonet frog a small slit has been cut in the upper rear face of the belt loop section, this engages over the left hand tunic belt support hook (one of which was located at each waist) and holds the frog firmly in place.



Below: The typically heavily polished buckle of the buff leather belt bearing the motto 'Dieu Et Mon Droit' (God And My Right). The punched holes and buckles at either side allow for size adjustment.



Above: Detail of the collar badges. Issued in a left and right inward facing pair they bore the wording 'Princess Charlotte of Wales's'. The regimental button also bore this inscription but with the addition of 'R. Berks' and the royal crown.

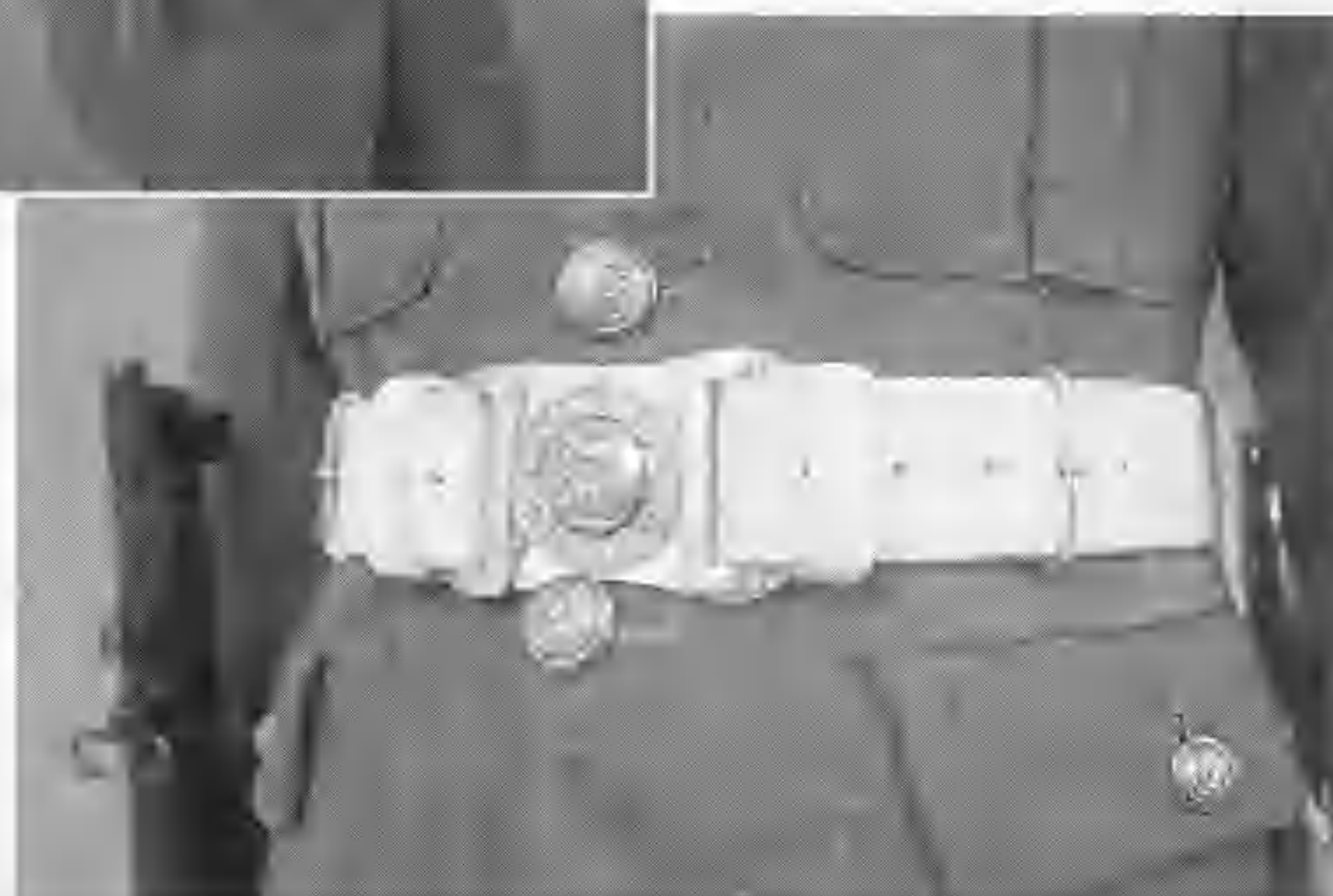
the 4th stood at 547, rising to 630 in 1937, and 704 by 1938. Reaching a maximum strength of 724 in July 1939, the Battalion was divided to form the 4th and the 6th Battalions. The Territorial Army was embodied into the Regular Army in September of 1939, with the 4th Battalion becoming part of the 145th Infantry Brigade 48th Division which moved to France in January 1940 as part of the BEF.

#### Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the following for their assistance, Steve Pearce, Allan Gill, and Major P. J. Ball (retd) of the Royal Gloucestershire, Berkshire & Wiltshire Regiment Museum. Also Major (retd) J. H. Peters MBE.

There are published references indicating that a triangular badge backing was worn on

the cap badge during and prior to World War 11, the authors correspondence with the regimental museum would appear to bring into doubt any use of the backing prior to 1948.





# Deadly Combination

The small calibre 7mm Mauser had already given a shock to the US Army during their war with Spain in Cuba. Now, a year later in South Africa, it would shake the mighty British Empire to its core. GUY and LEONARD A-R-WEST test the Mauser and report on the battlefield performance that made it legendary.

On the 11th of October 1899, the Second Boer War broke out, a war that first demonstrated the effectiveness of a small calibre high velocity weapon in the hands of adroit marksman at long-range. The well disciplined British soldier supremely confident in his magazine rifle and drill, used to defeating poorly armed and led native warriors, considered himself more than a match and could decisively overthrow a motley handful of untrained farmers. However, their new foe, strong men of character, stout defenders of home, armed with the 7mm Mauser, were a most devastating combination.

## The Boer

The Boers were swifter and far more mobile than the British, each having a strong African pony bred to withstand the severe conditions of the high flatlands known as the veld. Adept at using natural cover and camouflage, the traditional mode of attack was to lie in wait on a *kopje*<sup>1</sup> behind cover of rocks, their horses nearby and ready to make a quick getaway if their position was threatened. The efficient smokeless powder of their state-of-the-art Mausers did not betray their positions making detection and accurate return fire extremely difficult.

Legends abound of incredible feats of marksmanship: head shots up to 600 yards. There is evidence of British officers being picked off at 1,200 yards and on occasion beyond; the clear African climate and conditions being ideal for long-range shooting. The British soldier (Khakis) soon learnt to respect the new ear-stinging sonic crack of the 7mm cupro-nickel jacketed bullet and avoided close proximity with officers and white painted stones<sup>2</sup>. Boers from an early age learnt how to handle a rifle, their very

survival in the austere African veld depending on marksmanship skills and veldcraft.

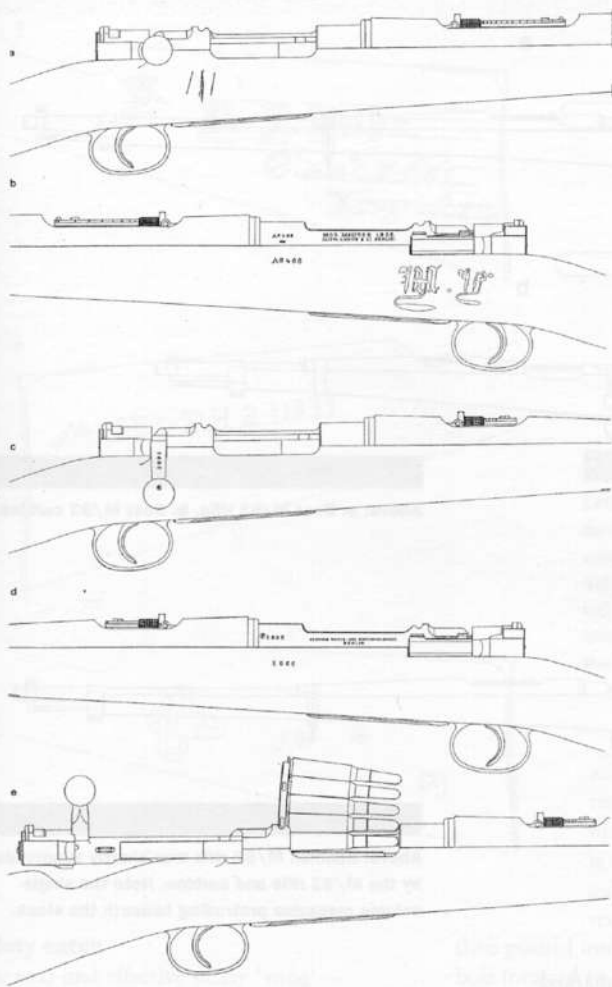
Neither of the two sister republics, Orange Free State *Oranje Vrij Staat* (OVS) — and the South African Republic — *ZuidAfrikaansche Republiek* (ZAR) — had a standing army, all European able-bodied males between the ages of sixteen and sixty had to be available for military service. In an emergency, 'going on *commando*', meant each man (unpaid apart from police and regular artillery) was expected to provide himself with a rifle or carbine (which he kept at home), horse, sufficient ammunition and rations to last just over a week. If the *commando* lasted longer, it became the government's responsibility to supply and feed the men. There were no official badges of rank, Commandants<sup>3</sup> and Field-coronets<sup>4</sup> often slept in the same tent as burghers, the Boer army could ideally be described as a true citizens army. No army could boast such superb marksmen and as ammunition was difficult to obtain in the veld, they were trained to conserve it. The only professional units were the state artilleries which were equipped with the most modern guns. An interesting display of Anglophobia at the time, is the international support given the Boers, volunteers coming from America, Austria, France, Germany, Holland, Ireland, Italy, Russia, Scandinavia,

The men who stood up to the might of the British Empire, two Boer brothers resplendent in their bandoliers pose for the camera, the man seated, proudly displaying his charger loading carbine. The bandoliers are the 'double pocket' type with a single flap.



Right: Shooting the Boer M/93 carbine in period costume.





Left: a. Detail of right side of rifle, note the three notches in the stock. b. Left side showing 'A' prefix serial number, manufacturer and the initials 'MF'. c. Detail of right side of carbine, note shorter sight leaf and turned down bolt. d. Left side of carbine showing serial number and manufacturer.

operation, and an enhanced trigger mechanism which could not be fired unless the bolt was fully locked. The M/92 was superseded in 1893 by yet another model and adopted in early December 1893, known as the Model M93 or M/93 with the major improvement of a staggered column feed magazine, which permitted it to be flush with the bottom of the stock. The M/93 proved to be an outstanding success and Paul Mauser was awarded the Grand Cross of the Order for Military Merit from the

delighted Spanish. This model was an important development in the Mauser system on the way to the famous Model of 1898.

The first demonstration of the effectiveness of the M/93 was in 1898 during the Spanish-American War which made the Mauser popular worldwide. The greatly outnumbered Spaniards armed mainly with M/93 rifles and carbines demonstrated the superior velocity of the 7mm and rapidity of charger loading over the .30-40 Krag rifle at San Juan Hill in Cuba. It forced the US to conclude the fact that rapidity of fire could be just as important as accuracy. This was a rehearsal for what the British soldiers were about to receive in South Africa.

After the Jameson Raid disaster<sup>4</sup>, an abortive attempt to get the Union Jack flying in Pretoria, which resulted in Rhodes resigning as Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, prompted the ZAR and OVS into an intensive arms buying programme (the money for these armaments, claimed by the British at the time, was wrung from the Outlanders). The Republics who were searching for a new rifle to supplement a shortfall became aware of the new Spanish M/93. A few samples and ammunition were acquired from Germany for appraisal. So impressed was the Government who appreciated the potential of the M/93 that an

immediate order for around 25,000 Mausers with slings and a substantial quantity of ammunition was placed. Mauser rifles, carbines and ammunition were expeditiously purchased<sup>5</sup>. After the Bloemfontain conference in May 1899, an attempt to resolve contention between the Boers and British, purchases were increased until the British blockade effectively halted imports. Around 49,000 carbines and rifles were purchased by the Boer Republics. Prior to the war, four types of official weapons were used by both the OVS and the ZAF: .450" Martini-Henry, 8mm Guedes, 6.5mm Krag and 7mm Mauser. Boers could purchase their weapons at cost or at a reasonable price from the Government or if preferred through the trade. Poor Boers who could not afford to pay were given rifles.

As most of the Boers owned their weapons, many personalised their property by carving the stocks. Carved stocks were a common feature, especially on many ZAR Mausers, carved in quiet moments to fill in time with the owner's birthplace, initials, names and *commandos*. Some are beautifully marked with elaborate inscriptions showing great talent whilst others have their initials crudely scratched. This practice of 'stock-art' gives the Boer longarm a unique provenance which occasionally provides sufficient information to trace its original owner. Official military weapons of other countries were prohibited from such a custom by their users.

### Variations

Minor manufacturing variations can be found on the M.93/95: some bolt stems are not blended to the knob, rear trigger guard screws are flush whilst others are countersunk and offset.

### M.93/95 (ZAR) test rifle

The M.93/95 was a typical military rifle of the period, its lengthy barrel believed to be necessary to burn early smokeless powder efficiently. Its straight-hand one-piece stock was made from walnut. A wooden handguard runs from the front of the receiver covering the rear sight base to just forward of the lower band to prevent burns to the hand and to aid in reducing visible heat distortion which the barrel generates by continuous firing. The upper band has a conventional bayonet lug underneath and the lower a sling swivel, both bands are held in place by leaf springs. A half-length clearing/cleaning rod lies beneath the muzzle. Singly it can be used with a piece of cloth to clean the chamber or as a weight for a pull through. Two would have been joined together to make a rod long enough for the length of the bore, the rod also acts to pile the arm. The finish is a credit to the manufacturer, a lustrous polished blue of the highest quality which is reflected in the workmanship. The rear trigger guard screw is of the countersunk and offset type

United States and a few British settlers who felt allegiance to their new home. It required more than 400,000 British troops to defeat the Boers although neither republican army was defeated outright. Britain muddled through and eventually won the war which ended on the 31st of May 1902. Germany encouraged by Britain's blunders stepped up her military armaments programme and the British soldier again faced the Mauser in 1914, but in the ultimate model of the M/98. Britain by then had adopted the excellent short-magazine Lee-Enfield and having transformed its system of musketry, halted the most gallantly pressed German attacks by rifle fire of accuracy, rapidity and intensity hitherto unseen on a battlefield. One superstition against lighting three cigarettes on one match grew out of the Boer War, soldiers believing it provided the Boers too much time at night to aim.

### The Mauser

Paul Mauser succeeded in securing a contract with Spain to produce troop test infantry rifles in 1891 chambered for the 7.65mm cartridge. By 1892 a modified model was presented and officially accepted in November 1892, introducing a 7mm cartridge, bolt with a long non-rotating extractor which provided smoother



mentioned earlier. The straight bolt stem is not blended to the knob, some M/93/95 rifles can be found with their bolt stems turned down which was a modification by their owners.

### Markings

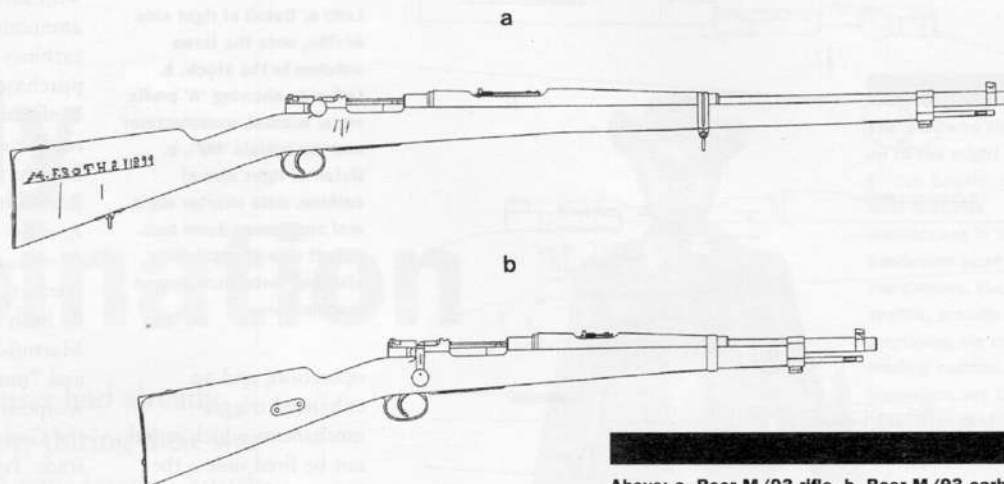
The left side of the receiver is marked 'MOD.MAUSER 1896. LUDW.LOEWE & CO BERLIN'. This indicates that it was manufactured prior to the 7th of November 1896, as Ludwig Loewe & Company merged with DEUTSCHE METALLPATRONENFABRIK (DM) and ROTTWEIL-HAMBURG POWDER COMPANY to become DEUTSCHE WAFFEN-UND MUNITIONSFABRIKEN. BERLIN (DWM).

The serial number A8####, first letter prefix indicates the first batch of 10,000 rifles which arrived in Pretoria late 1896. Serial numbers are stamped on the left side of the receiver ring<sup>7</sup> and just below on the stock; the bolt stem, trigger guard front tang; clearing/cleaning rod. The serial number's last two digits: base of the rear sight leaf; cursor and magazine floor plate. Under the receiver serial number, a horizontal crowned Fraktur 'L' proof mark (*Beschuss*)<sup>8</sup> also repeated larger on the bolt stem. The crown indicates an inspector acting on behalf of the sovereign.

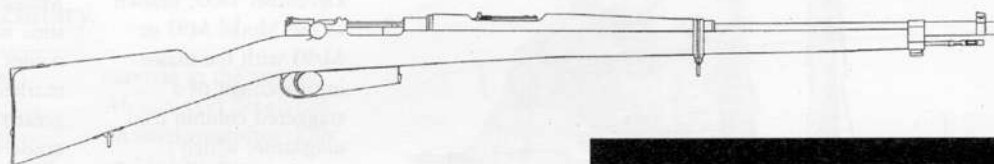
The right side of the stock just below the receiver bear four interesting vertical notches, one significantly wider than the others. The right side of the butt has two additional notches and crudely inscribed with the owners name: 'M F BOTH A Y 1899'. Along the stock on the right side below the rear sight, there are a series of scruff marks where the rifle was rested on a hard surface. The left side of the stock just below the bolt release lever, the initials 'M F' 16mm high is engraved in fraktur script. The butt has 'M F BOTH A'. ELANDSVLEI. KRUGERSDORP<sup>10</sup> also 16mm high and artistically engraved in fraktur. All pencil guide-lines are still clearly visible.

### M.93/95 (ZAR) test carbine

The stock is shorter but identical to the rifle and with a narrower butt. Bluing and workmanship is also of high quality. Besides its length the only differences are: the turned-down bolt, rear sight leaf which is 35.7mm shorter and method of retaining the sling situated on the left side of the butt and left side of the lower band. The rear trigger guard screw is of the countersunk and offset type. A half-length clearing/cleaning rod lies beneath the muzzle. The clearing/cleaning rod was used in the same way as mentioned on the rifle.



Above: a. Boer M/93 rifle. b. Boer M/93 carbine.



Above: Spanish M/92 rifle was shortly superseded by the M/93 rifle and carbine. Note the single-column magazine protruding beneath the stock.

### Markings

The left side of the receiver is marked 'DEUTSCHE WAFFEN-UND MUNITIONSFABRIKEN.BERLIN' (DWM) This indicates that it was manufactured after the 7 November 1896 when Ludwig Loewe became DWM.

The serial number 5#### has no letter prefix, indicates the last batch of 7000 carbines which arrived at Pretoria late in 1897. Carbines were not issued with a letter prefix. Serial numbers are stamped on: the left side of the receiver ring and just below on the stock; the bolt stem, trigger guard front tang; clearing/cleaning rod, and the serial number's last two digits: base of the rear sight leaf; cursor and magazine floor plate. In front the receiver serial number, a 'B' in a circle proof mark is also repeated on the bolt knob. The left side of the butt has a 5mm high monogram in a 9mm diameter circle. The left side of the butt are the initials 'JM' and 'CM' haphazardly applied and crudely cut, probably that of the owner and a relation.

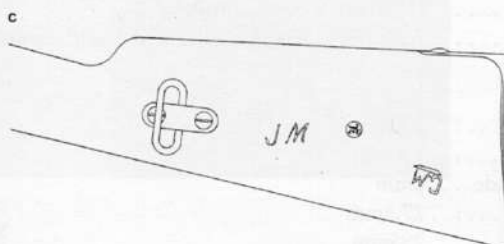
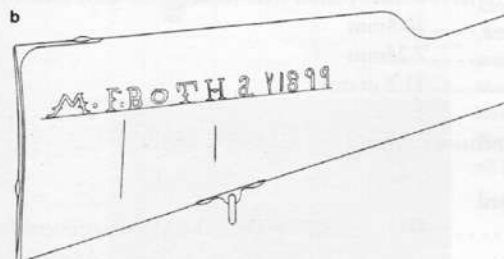
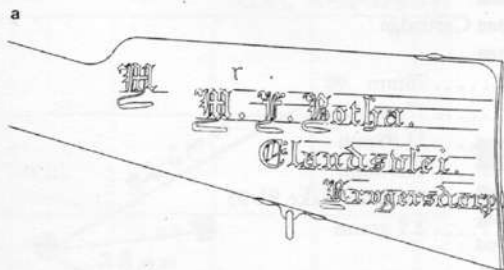
### Bolt

The forged bolt is one-piece, polished and left in the 'white', and has duel-opposed locking lugs at its head to provide even locking on both sides of the receiver, a 90° turn from vertical locks the bolt into the receiver ring. There is a single narrow groove cut into the bolt body that aligns with a projection connected to the sear<sup>11</sup>,

only when the bolt is completely closed and the two locking fully engaged, the sear can be released by the trigger. The long, hardened and tempered spring steel non-rotating extractor is mounted along the outside-right of the bolt and has a wide claw. As the extractor doesn't rotate the claw cannot rub or cut the cartridge rim or extractor groove during bolt lift. The bolt-face is partly recessed, combined with the extractor create a feed sequence safeguarding against double-loading. The bolt can be easily stripped without the use of tools and as there is no removable bolt-head which can be detached and lost and the bolt replaced — with disastrous consequences.

There is no provision to vent gas in the event of a ruptured case head or primer, which is unusual as this safety device was incorporated on many contemporary longarms. The bolt cocks-on-closing and has a long prominent cocking-piece, easily seen at a glance or felt with the thumb in the dark which indicated a cocked state. The bolt face underside is flat, this feature was to provide a larger area of the bolt face to contact cartridge heads when feeding from the magazine. The flat was later found unnecessary and abandoned on the subsequent Chilean M/95<sup>12</sup>, 'flat' bottom bolt-heads are not interchangeable in receivers made for round bolt-heads.





Left: ZAR belt buckle with the motto 'Eendract Maakt Magt' In Unity lies strength.

Left: a. Detail of left side of rifle butt, the pencil guide lines are still evident. b. Right side of rifle butt, note the two notches. c. Detail of left side of carbine butt showing crudely cut initials JM and CM. Note the sling swivel.

### Safety catch

The neat and effective safety 'wing' introduced on the Mauser M/71 was to become a feature of the Mauser system — retained to this day. Basically, there are three positions:

1. To the left disengaged
2. When cocked, turned 90° to the intermediate position locks the cocking-piece back and the bolt can be opened and closed and can be used to empty the magazine<sup>13</sup>. The arm although perfectly safe, cannot be carried in a vertical position with the safety at 90° as a slight upwards push on the knob is sufficient to open the bolt and automatically eject a cartridge.
3. When cocked, for safe carriage turned 180° the safety locks both the cocking-piece back and the bolt closed.

### General

The double-pull trigger system was introduced with the M/41 Dreyse needle-fire system giving a long total pull, ideally suited for military purposes. The staggered-column magazine feeds to alternate sides aided by a rimless case permits a good and smooth cartridge supply.

### Charger

The most outstanding single feature of the M.93/95 was its expendable five-round charger system. The Boers fully aware of this important feature played on it; when posing for photographs usually displayed their rifles

and carbines with the bolt retracted and if need be topped-up singly. The complete charger is inserted either end into the guides cut into the front of the receiver bridge; cartridges are

then pushed into the magazine. Pushing the bolt forward to chamber the first round automatically ejects the stripped charger which is discarded or if required later replenished. The light-weight and compact charger gripped the cartridge by its extraction groove.

### Model

There is much confusion over the precise identification of the M.93/95 Mauser: This is exacerbated by the non-standard method of marking. 'Mod Mauser 1895' or 1896 or 1897 found inscribed on the receiver, the year is an indication of manufacture date, not of a significantly new model type. The Mausers used by the Boers are essentially the Spanish M/93 with minor differences and were referred to by Ludwig Loewe as the M.93/95. The simplest method of describing the model is the 'Boer M/93' and hereafter referred to as the Boer M/93. The 'MOD' on Loewe Mausers was misinterpreted and Boers often referred to their Mausers as 'Mot Mauser', a practice perpetuated by collectors today.

### Sights

The rear sight consists of a standing set at 300 metres and leaf with 'V' notch, pivoted to the rear of its bed. For greater ranges, the leaf is lifted backward through 90° and a linear scale displayed. The settings for the leaf is achieved with an adjustable cursor representing an increment of 100 metres of elevation. The cursor maintains its position

by the engagement of a sprung pivoted catch on the right side of the leaf. The rear sight is simple, clear to read and functional owing much of its design to the earlier Mauser M.71/84; it can be locked down securely with the cursor pushed fully forward engaging a block at the front of the bed. The barleycorn foresight bed is carried on a tube underneath which fits round and is screwed and soldered to the barrel. This method forms a firm attachment for the sight and if the heat generated by rapid fire softened the solder, the screw prevented movement. The foresight is dovetailed to its bed and marked to its setting after testing for accuracy.

### The 7 x 57 cartridge

In 1892 the 7mm cartridge was developed by Paul Mauser especially for the Spanish Mauser. Ignition was by a brass Berdan primer sealed with a water proofing lacquer. The case shares the same rimless and bottle-neck design as the earlier 7.65 and 7.92mm, but with a longer case neck which provides better support for the bullet. The bullet was cupro-nickel steel jacketed and retained in the case by a three-split collet crimp around the case mouth.

### Soft nose

Soft nose ammunition, of which 5.5mm of the ogive is exposed to expand on impact, had been for hunting purposes, and possibly used later as ammunition stocks dwindled.

### Kortnek

A cartridge with a 4mm shorter case neck found their way into the Republic's magazines, it was called 'Kortnek'<sup>14</sup> (short-neck). Examined cases appear to be 'necked-down' 7.65 x 53mm, probably initially intended for the Argentine M/91 Mauser and several suffer from cracks and creases around the shoulder<sup>15</sup>. Using shorter cases was a potentially dangerous practice: with the shorter neck, when the bullet leaves the case mouth there is an unsupported area by which part of the bullet's jacket can be detached from the body and remain in the lead. The next cartridge is chambered and on discharge the pressure generated by the obstruction will



## Technical data

### Boer M/93 rifle

Bore diameter ..... 7mm  
 Groove diameter ..... 7.25mm  
 Barrel length ..... 741mm (bolt-face to muzzle)  
 Bore grooves ..... 4 right hand twist  
 Rate of twist ..... one turn in 220mm  
 Overall length ..... 1,233mm  
 Width ..... 93mm  
 Trigger pull ..... 4kg  
 Weight ..... 4.5kg with sling and empty magazine  
 Fore sight ..... unprotected barleycorn  
 Sight radius ..... 644mm  
 Rear sight  
 configuration ..... standing block 300mm and leaf 2,000m  
 Lock time ..... 7.4 ms  
 Clearing rod ..... slotted, 438mm long, including threaded  
 ..... portion  
 Velocity muzzle ..... 728 m/s  
 Velocity V=25m ..... 700 m/s

### Boer M/93 carbine

Bore diameter ..... 7mm  
 Groove diameter ..... 7.25mm  
 Barrel length ..... 459mm (bolt-face to muzzle)  
 Bore grooves ..... 4 right hand twist  
 Rate of twist ..... one turn in 220mm  
 Overall length ..... 949mm  
 Width ..... 76.5mm  
 Trigger pull ..... 3.5 kg  
 Weight ..... 4kg with sling and empty magazine  
 Fore sight ..... unprotected barleycorn (initially protected)  
 Sight radius ..... 337.5mm  
 Rear sight  
 configuration ..... standing block 300m and leaf 1400m  
 Lock time ..... 7.4ms  
 Clearing rod ..... slotted, 262mm long, including threaded  
 ..... portion  
 Velocity muzzle ..... 665 m/s  
 Velocity V=25m ..... 640 m/s

**Note:** Above dimensions taken from the test rifle and carbine

### 7 X 57mm Mauser Cartridge

Case  
 Overall length ..... 78mm  
 Length ..... 57mm  
 Head diameter ..... 11.98mm  
 Rim diameter ..... 11.98mm  
 Charge ..... Rottweil-flake 91/93  
 Charge weight ..... 2.5 grams

### Bullet

Bullet jacket material . Nickel-plated steel jacket with hard lead core  
 Length ..... 30.8mm  
 Diameter ..... 7.25mm  
 Weight ..... 11.2 grams

**Note:** Above dimensions taken from DM 1897 cartridge

### Headstamps noted

Ball ..... DM 1896 KDM: Deutsche Metallpatronenfabrik  
 Softnose ..... DM 1897 KDM: Deutsche Metallpatronenfabrik  
 Kortnek ..... DM 1896 F<sup>V</sup>AF<sup>V</sup>A: Fusiles y  
 ..... Ametralladores (for rifles and machineguns)

### Sword bayonet

Overall length ..... 599mm  
 Length of blade ..... 470mm  
 Thickness of blade ... 8mm  
 Width of blade ..... 27.5mm  
 Length of fuller ..... 295mm  
 Width of fuller ..... 13mm  
 Number of saw-teeth .45  
 Muzzle ring diameter . 15.5mm  
 Scabbard length ..... 500mm  
 Weight of bayonet ... 725g  
 Weight of scabbard .. 175g  
 Total length of rifle  
 and bayonet ..... 1,703mm  
 Total length of carbine  
 and bayonet ..... 1,419mm

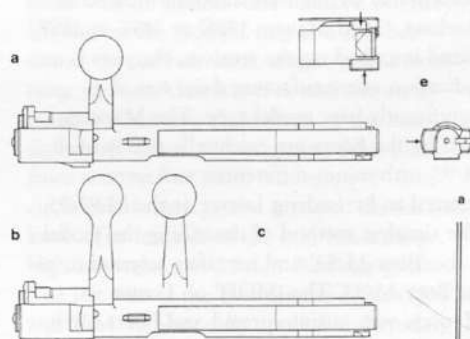
**Note:** Above dimensions taken from an example from the Roy Williams collection

exceed the strength of the bolt or chamber, or both! Incidentally, some burghers preferred these rounds, claiming them to be more accurate.

### M/93 bayonet

It is often claimed that bayonets were never used by the Boers and it is true they were never popular, the Boers had no desire for close-quarter or hand-to-hand combat. However, small quantities of bayonets<sup>16</sup> were apparently used — more as sidearms than bayonets. A contemporary photograph has been examined of a commando armed with Boer M/93 rifles and carbines (incidentally one is armed with a captured Lee-Metford or Enfield with fixed bayonet), with one member wearing a knife bayonet of the Spanish M/93<sup>17</sup> type.

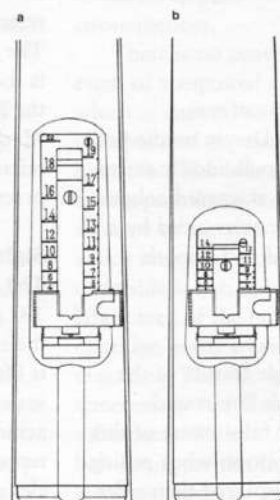
Sword bayonets with saw-backs were ordered for garrison artillery, but ostensibly never arrived due to the British blockade. The consignment was manufactured by Simson &



**Left:** a. Complete carbine bolt. b. Complete rifle bolt with blended knob. c. Rifle bolt not blended with stem. d. Underside of bolt-head, the

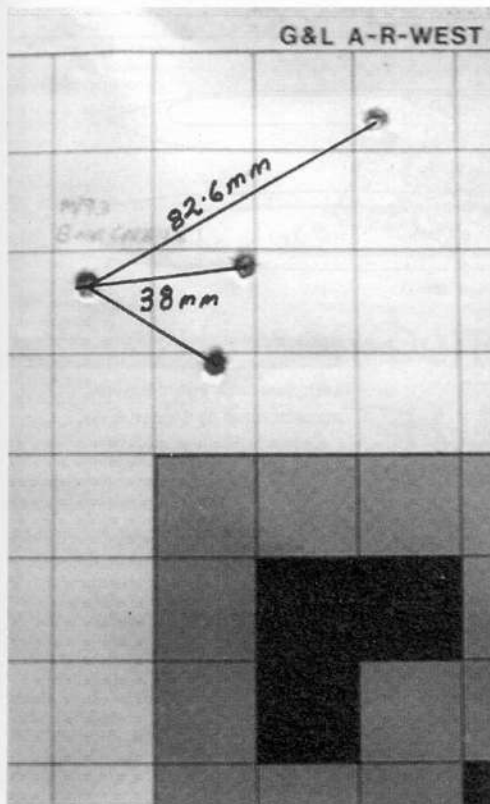
opposed locking lugs can clearly be seen (arrowed). e. Showing the large extractor (arrowed), flat underside, and recessed bolt-face.

Co of Suhl marked on the left side ricasso. These brass gripped bayonets resemble the German Mauser M/71 *Seitengewehr* saw-backed pattern issued to NCOs but with a slightly longer blade; no finial at the top of the muzzle ring and a fully swept back quillon of the M/1890 Turkish pattern. Its black leather scabbard with brass mounts and long frog stud closely resembles the German pattern.



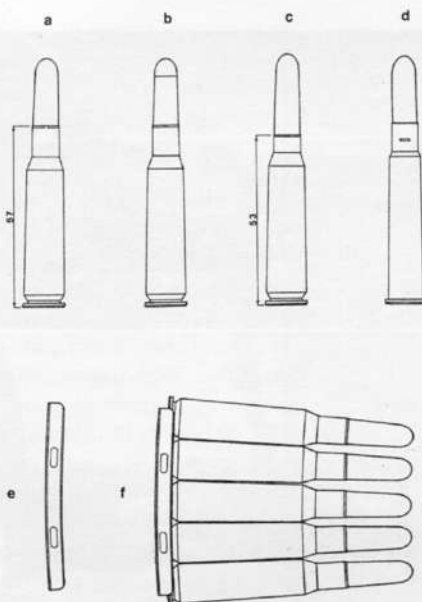
**Left:** Top view of rear sights: a. Rifle, maximum sight setting 2,000 metres. b. Carbine, maximum 1,400 metres.





Left: A 82.6mm group shot using the Boer M/93 carbine with sword bayonet fixed.

Below: a. 7mm cartridge. Its 11.2 gram (172.8 grain) bullet out-performed the British 215 grain bullet at all combat ranges. At 500 yards the 7mm was still supersonic and the .303" 45 feet per second below. b. 7mm Soft nose. c. 7mm Kortnek. Note the shorter case length. d. The .303" MkII 'C' (C-Cordite) used the new cordite propellant. Its nickel jacket bullet lacked stopping power as had been demonstrated in the North West Frontier of India and in the Sudan. e. The light-weight brass charger. f. Charger with all five cartridges inserted.



## Frog

The frog for the sword bayonet was made from white buff leather and differed from the German pattern having a 'V' shaped slot for the frog stud to rest in, which relied on a tight fit rather than an enclosed aperture. The loop is reinforced with two copper rivets and brass washers the front section has two more rivets strengthening the upper corners.

## Belt and buckle

A special belt and buckle was produced but never arrived, also a victim of the blockade. The belt was made from good quality buff leather. The brass 'box' buckle was similar in construction to the contemporary German pattern with a ZAR monogram in the centre and bore the inscription: 'Eendract Maakt Magt' around the rim.

## Accessories

A stamped one-piece brass foresight and muzzle protector was used for rifles and carbines, this accessory prevented the ingress of dust and rain damaging the bore when not in use. Carbines were originally issued with foresight protectors but were unpopular and generally removed as during the heat of combat the wings could be easily mistaken for the foresight<sup>18</sup>. Removal was easily accomplished by the extraction of a horizontal transverse screw passing through the carbine's foresight bed. Carbines with their original foresight protectors are rarely encountered today.

## Sling

The black leather sling is 1,085mm long, 32.7mm wide and 3mm thick with border

tooling<sup>19</sup>. It passed through the lower band swivel and a brass stud fastens it to the rear butt swivel, tension and adjustment is achieved with a brass sliding buckle. There appears to have been only one standard type issued which fitted both the rifle and carbine, however, many home-made examples were used or preferred.

## Bandoliers

As a great number of the Boers were mounted, the bandolier method was favoured over the bulky belt-held ammunition pouch. A variety were used and supplied by local as well as foreign firms and a number home-made. The typical bandolier was brown leather and had twelve pouches; each pouch held a charger containing five cartridges. This essential piece of equipment was slung over the shoulder and when the pouch was emptied it could be easily rotated to the next.

## Accuracy and shooting test

For accuracy testing, the rifle and carbine were rested on a portable bench rest and a chronograph<sup>20</sup> placed at 25 metres from the

muzzle. Shooting was undertaken both at one hundred and two hundred metres with ammunition duplicating the original bullet weight, profile and velocity<sup>21</sup>. Testing included rapidity of shooting in the standing, kneeling and prone positions. As we had access to an original sword bayonet, we were curious as to how the bayonet affected the accuracy at 100 metres when fixed to the rifle and carbine.

To give a critical appraisal of the Boer M/93, it was necessary to compare it with its British counterpart, a Magazine Lee-Enfield, Mark I\* dated 1901 used during the Boer war and subject of a future shooting test article for *Military Illustrated*.

## Handling

The bolt action of the Boer M/93 system is easy and smooth to operate in all positions. Both safety catches are a little noisy and stiff to apply. The double-stage trigger pull suffered no 'creep' at the second stage with both rifle and carbine, the two stages do permit a useful final pull. When charger loading, the lack of a thumb clearance on the left side of the receiver wall makes using the right thumb easier. Cartridges chambered effortlessly and ejected empties positively.

## Comments on rifle

Balance is excellent for a military rifle, which relates to its sound design and contributes to accurate shooting. There is little felt recoil in the prone position as the weight of rifle and adequate size butt plate absorbs it. The long horizontal bolt comes very easily to the hand, without the eyes taken off the target. Trigger pull is slightly heavier than the carbine which presented no problem during the test. The long sight radius coupled with excellent sight picture is inherently accurate. However, as the minimum sight setting is 300m the rifle shot approximately 45cm high at 100 metres which means that a very fine sight picture coupled with a 6 o'clock hold is maintained to compensate. As the Boers knew their weapons, ranges under 300 metres would not have presented a problem. For the Johannesburg *commando*, however, which consisted of civil servants and clerks, initially they might have fired high. With the sword bayonet fixed, groups opened up and printed 127mm to the left at 100 metres.

## Carbine

The carbine is muzzle light, as can be expected. The turned-down bolt for ease of carriage is not as easily operated when the attention is fixed on the target. However, the bolt lying just above the trigger is much better adapted to rapid shooting, making it marginally faster shoot than the rifle. Common with all carbines when firing full-power ammunition, the powder is not fully



consumed in the short barrel and approximately 19 m/s velocity is lost in comparison with the rifle. Muzzle flash in poor light is noticeable and blast is excessively heavy and in the prone position on a dry day raises a cloud of dust, and would have left an easily detectable signature on the veldt, this must have meant that the Boer thus armed would have

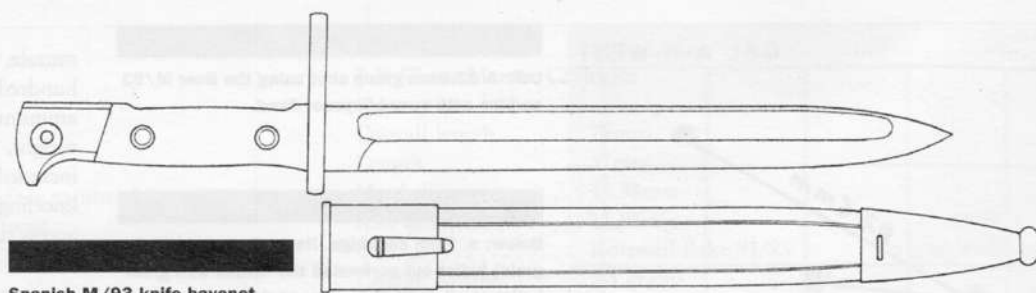
had to have picked his position very carefully. Recoil is very noticeable, particularly in the prone position, the narrower and thinner butt plate exacerbates this, however, it is tolerable when wearing a thick jacket. As recoil is sharp, the butt swivel can catch the cheek inflicting quite a painful shock which inevitably leads to flinching. This problem was alleviated by changing the rear swivel and lower band to the right side of the stock, it must have been a problem as

many contemporary photographs show this arrangement. Basically, with its shorter sight radius combined with recoil it requires more effort to shoot than the rifle. Its lighter weight and shorter overall handy length gives it optimal handling characteristics necessary for the artillery, dragoon/cavalry and in the bush. As with the rifle, the minimum sight setting placed shots approximately 45 cm high at 100 metres. With the sword bayonet fixed, groups printed 76mm to the left, but were lighter. We cannot explain this, as when a bayonet is fixed to a rifle or a carbine, in our experience, it affects barrel harmonics, usually with a reduction of accuracy<sup>22</sup>. A noticeable decrease in felt recoil was experienced with the heavy sword bayonet attached.

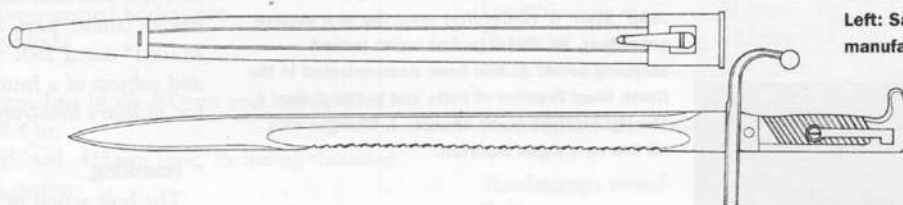
The Boer M/93 rifles and carbines were outstanding longarms, and in our opinion there are only two criticisms we can level against the action: 1. In the event of a primer or case rupturing, there is no provision in the bolt head for venting gas harmlessly away from the shooters face; 2. The magazine follower is not squared<sup>23</sup> at the rear to prevent 'blind loading'; after ejecting the last case, the bolt will close on an empty chamber.

## Conclusion

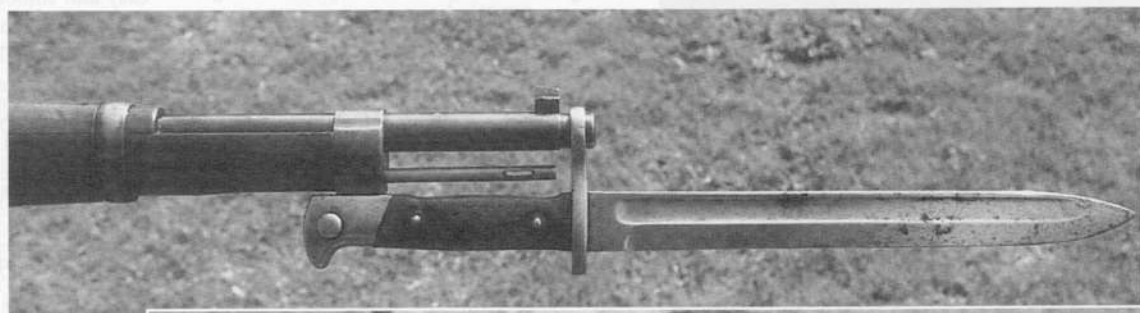
The Boer M/93 system was the best longarm used during the war and proved it emphatically, its rugged simple overall mechanical design ensured few maintenance



Spanish M/93 knife bayonet.



Left: Saw-back sword bayonet manufactured by Simson & Co.



Below: Spanish M/93 knife bayonet fixed to the carbine.



Above: Sword bayonet fixed to the carbine.

problems; by virtue of its charger system it could be loaded more rapidly than any of its contemporaries, and permanently changed the direction of longarm development. However, the Martini-Henry<sup>24</sup> which saw service on both sides, Guedes, and especially the Krag with its effortless bolt action and ballistically slightly superior performance to the Boer M/93, were excellent military rifles and played an important role in the hands of the Boers. As 7mm ammunition dwindled away because of the British blockade, the Boers began to use increasing numbers of captured Lee-Enfield rifles, and to supplement ammunition it became a practice to follow British columns and collect 'dropped' cartridges. Subsequent Lee-Enfields were modified with the addition of a Mauser-inspired charger loading system, and the British were anxious to adopt a comparable arm of the same calibre which resulted with the rimless .276" (7mm) cartridge Pattern 1913 rifle.

With such a successful battle proven calibre as the 7mm with its impressive trajectory, it poses the interesting question as to why the efficient German army retained the larger 7.92mm for so long? It was decided that the 7.92mm by virtue of its larger size had superior lethality and wind-riding qualities. However, by 1939 German ballistic research came to the conclusion that 7mm was the most suitable calibre for a sniper rifle.

As the centenary of the second Anglo-Boer War draws closer, interest in this period has increased, so has demand and prices in associated memorabilia. Stock-art of quality is especially sought after by collectors and reflected in their price. It must be mentioned that the Boers also used the 7mm sporting



Im Kampfe für Freiheit & Recht vereint.  
  
 GOD en de MAUSER.

# Gruß von den Schlachtfeldern Süd-Afrika's.

Jos. Kilau, Johannesburg.

Left: Postcard from the Boer War, note 'God en de Mauser' God and the Mauser.

Mauser based on the M/93 action. Contemporary photographs have been examined showing women armed with such rifles complete with bandolier and slouch hat accompanying their husbands into battle. These beautiful rifles with long elegant barrels have turned down bolts, some have thumb cut-outs for charger loading, adjustable foresights, chequered pistol grips, cheek pieces, *schnabel* fore-end and often with inlaid oval silver escutcheon plates in the right side of the butt●

## Notes

- 1 A small hill pronounced koppie.
- 2 Rocks and stones were painted and tin cans placed at predetermined ranges to aid sight setting.
- 3 Similar rank to a British Colonel.
- 4 Similar rank to a British Captain.
- 5 In 1895 the Johannesburg Outlanders (*uitlanders* — foreigners) who had been secretly preparing for war called on Doctor Leander Starr Jameson, a medical Doctor administrator of the British South Africa Company in Mashonaland and friend of Cecil Rhodes (sometimes called the 'Napoleon of South Africa'). Jameson's force of six hundred troopers crossed the Transvaal border on the Mafeking road and marched on Johannesburg. They were signally defeated and compelled to surrender to Cronje at Doorn Kop on the second of January 1896. The raid was regarded as a declaration of war between Britain and the Boer Republics.
- 6 The price was around £3 for a rifle or carbine with sling and cartridges over £6 per thousand.
- 7 Orange Free State Mauser rifles number

were marked OVS over the serial number on the left side of the receiver ring and just below on the stock.

8 At the time and unlike Britain, Germany had a complicated and incongruent law regarding proof with smokeless powder and the proof houses used their own discretion and markings. New proof rules were introduced in 1911-12.

9 Communication with the Oorlogs Museum in South Africa revealed that no information about M F Botha exists, however, there was a possible relation: twenty-nine year old M J Botha, Matthys Johannes Botha also from Elandsvlei district of Krugersdorp (ten miles West of Johannesburg), in the Transvaal. According to their archives, M J was captured at Rietpan (seven miles East of Middelburg), in the Transvaal during a British 'drive' on the 10th of April 1902, this made him a *bittereinder* — bitter-ender (a Boer who remained in the field to the end). He was transported to India on the 14th of May 1902.

10 Krugersdorp denoting ZAR Commando which was divided into three districts by numbers. Krugersdorp's claim to fame being part of the scene of the Jameson Raid.

11 The mechanism linked to the trigger which engages the cocking-piece.

12 M/95 Chilean action is identical except it has a third locking lug making it safer than the other pre-'98 actions.

13 The magazine can also be emptied by removing the floor plate using a bullet's ogive inserted into the floorplate latch, simultaneously depressing the button and pulling back towards the trigger guard.

14 Initially referred to as '*slegt*' (bad) cartridges. Some bullets still have traces of a green colour film, this was lubricant

applied to reduce friction between bullet and bore to prevent the bullet breaking up. It was not a coating of poison as was alleged.

15 Authors note: Sizing down a neck to reduce calibre can cause creases if the neck is not annealed prior to sizing.

16 It is interesting to note that certain batches of Martini-Henrys were supplied with their bayonets.

17 Based on the German Army issue M.71/84 *Seitengewehr*. Wood grips with pronounced contours, secured by two steel rivets and washers. The scabbard was leather with steel

mounts.

18 The authors experienced this with snap shooting the M/93 carbine, with the 8mm Commission 88 *karabiner*, and the 11mm *karabiner* M/71 which have similar foresight protection arrangements.

19 Dimension taken from an original sling.  
 20 An electronic instrument (usually portable) for measuring velocity in metres or feet per second.

21 It must be mentioned that the 7mm cartridge with the 11.2 gram round nosed full jacketed bullet or bullet mould are not commercially available.

22 The bayonet's muzzle ring contacting the muzzle alters the barrel's harmonics or vibration, more so than when the bayonet has no muzzle ring.

23 Spanish rifles and carbines magazine followers were squared at the rear, which is commonly termed as a 'hold-open' device.

24 To supplement the shortfall of Lee-Metfords and Lee-Enfields, Martini-Henry and Sniders were used by the British at the Siege of Kimberly. As there was a severe shortage of Boxer-Henry .45" cartridges, many Boer Martini-Henrys ended up ignominiously being cut down and used as dynamite detonators for de-railing trains.

Note: for those interested in information on the British uniform of this period, please contact the authors via the editor.

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to dedicate this article to Roy Wilson and express their gratitude to Margaret A-R-West, Sandy Johnstone, Johan Hattingh of the War Museum of the Boer Republics, Clifford Skinner and Roy Williams.



# Napoleon's Uniforms

The sombre grey greatcoat and small cocked hat is the most familiar garb of the great French warlord, but Napoleon wore a wide variety of uniforms throughout his career, including a turban and oriental robes to appease his Egyptian allies.

**PHILIP J. HAYTHORNTHWAITE** investigates his wardrobe.

As the dominant figure of the period named after him, Napoleon Bonaparte is one of the most often depicted military personalities in history. His most characteristic portrayal includes his familiar grey greatcoat and small cocked hat, but his uniforms were considerably more varied.

At the beginning of his military career, Napoleon's regimental uniform was that of the French artillery, its reserved colour-scheme of dark blue with blue facings and red piping adumbrating the rather plain uniform which he favoured in later life, for all except the grandest occasions. After his promotion to general officer, however, he would have adopted the staff uniform of the French Army, which he wore during his early campaigns in command of the Army of Italy. On 30 January 1796 amendments were made to the uniform of general officers, which had been specified in 1794. The long-tailed dark blue coat was lined in the same colour, the principal change being in its single-breasted cut, without lapels, with a single row of gilt buttons on the breast. The stand-and-fall collar and cuffs were scarlet, with white cuff flaps, and the coat was ornamented with gold oak-leaf embroidery which varied in amount according to rank. For lower-ranking generals the embroidery



was borne only upon the collar, cuffs and pockets, but for a general-in-chief (*général en chef*) it was present also upon the front edges and rear skirts. The grades of general officer were also distinguished by the colours of the plume and sash. For the lowest grade, *général de brigade*, the sash was sky blue with tricolour fringe, the plume tricoloured over a tricolour panache; for *général de division*, a



Above: Napoleon as *general en chef*, wearing the embroidered coat (engraving by Coquere after Hilaire Le Dou).

Left: Napoleon in the single-breasted uniform of 1796 (engraving after W. Greatbatch).

scarlet sash with tricolour fringe and a tricolour plume over a red panache; and for *général en chef*, a red and white sash and a red plume over a tricolour panache. The sash was worn around the waist, with a wide, blue velvet belt covered with gold oak-leaf embroidery, and with a gilt plate bearing 'RF' (*Republique Française*). Early portraits of Napoleon show this uniform, for example the famous Gros painting of Arcola, which depicts him wearing black gauntlets.

On 7 August 1798, amendments to the staff uniform introduced a double-breasted coat, of the same colouring and style of





Left: Napoleon in the uniform of First Consul (engraving by T. Johnson after Ingres).

Below: Napoleon in the double-breasted coat with oak-leaf embroidery (engraving by G.W. Harland after Appiani).



decoration as before, with a tricoloured sash for the *général en chef*. The coat which Napoleon wore at Marengo is of this style, with gold oak-leaf embroidery upon collar and cuffs, around the edges of the lapel, down the front edges and rear opening of the skirts (but not along the bottom edge of the skirts), with a double row of embroidery around the horizontal, three-pointed pockets. On the breast was a double row of six large gilt buttons in each, with three large buttons to each pocket and two at the rear waist, and three small buttons on each cuff flap. The regulations specified white smallclothes (waistcoat and breeches), but variations on service included the use of dark blue.

His assumption of political power, initially as Consul (1799) led to the use of a variety of costumes by Napoleon. Perhaps the most familiar was the 'uniform' of a Consul, which included a coat of similar style to the double-breasted version of general officers, but in the most distinctive colouring of red throughout (sometimes described as purple), with gold foliate embroidery upon the collar, cuffs, lapels and on the edges of the coat. Portraits also show gold embroidery upon the white waistcoat, breeches, and edging to the bicorne hat.

A much more elaborate costume was worn in Napoleon's capacity as emperor (from December 1804), similar to what might be termed the 'court dress' of the so-called *grands dignitaires* who held offices of state, an elaborate mixture of the late 18th and something akin to the late 16th or early 17th centuries in style. Napoleon's 'full dress' as emperor was the equivalent of the coronation

robes of other European sovereigns, but his ordinary ceremonial dress included a purple velvet coat with a great quantity of gold embroidery (even on the vertical seams of the sleeves), deep white cuffs with gold embroidery, and a cape of similar material and decoration, suspended from the right shoulder, lined with white satin also covered with gold embroidery (with the initial 'N' prominent). These were worn with white knee-breeches, white stockings with gold embroidery at the ankle, gold-embroidered white velvet shoes with white satin rosettes, a gold-fringed white waist-sash, and a 17th-century style hat with a diamond-set loop and a mass of white plumes.

For everyday wear and campaign, however, Napoleon's preference was for a uniform considerably less ornate than that worn by many of his subordinates. The uniform depicted most frequently included the undress coat of the *Chasseurs à Cheval* of the Imperial Guard, the unit which provided his closest escort and bodyguard on campaign; Napoleon's relationship with the Imperial Guard — especially with the 'Old Guard' which had served him longest — was uniquely personal and reinforced, perhaps quite deliberately, by his almost universal use of one of its uniforms. The *chasseurs'* undress coat was a simple, dark green, long-tailed garment with scarlet collar and pointed cuffs,

Below: Napoleon in winter dress, during the 1812 campaign (print after Verestchagin).



gilt buttons, dark green turnbacks with scarlet piping, bearing gold hunting-horn badges, and dark green lapels, piped scarlet, cut open to expose the waistcoat. It was worn with gold epaulettes on both shoulders, but without the aiguillette which was a distinguishing feature of Guard uniforms (although there is a reference to Napoleon's use of an aiguillette in 1804). The *chasseur* coat was usually worn with a white waistcoat and breeches, and white stockings and shoes for ordinary use and riding boots when mounted or on campaign; the waistcoat is usually depicted as single-breasted, with gilt buttons, but a portrait of 1804 by Gerard shows a double-breasted waistcoat with white, cloth-covered buttons. In October 1805, however, Napoleon was observed wearing blue breeches and waistcoat and hussar boots, and as early as 1804-05 there are documentary references to riding-overalls in green, grey, and sky-blue.

Perhaps the most recognisable feature of Napoleon's dress was (to quote Las Cases) 'that little hat which has in some measure become identified with his person'. Although in the early period Napoleon is depicted with a military hat of staff pattern, the more familiar type, worn in all the great campaigns as emperor, was a very individual, plain black bicorne, worn 'athwart' and with a curved front face or vestigial third corner. These hats (of which Napoleon must have had many: even at St. Helena he had several stolen by souvenir hunters) were devoid of decoration save for a small tricolour cockade and its loop, worn at the left front.



The lack of ostentatious display exemplified by the unadorned hat and *chasseur* coat was probably an expression of the fact that Napoleon had no need of outward show to emphasize the importance of his person, and a reflection of his image as a simple soldier; but was perhaps also evidence for his lack of concern about matters sartorial. Las Cases remarked that 'when he takes off his clothes...he throws them all upon the floor if one of his valets happens not to be at hand to take them for him. How many times have I stooped to pick up the cordon of the Legion of Honour, when I have seen it thrown carelessly on the ground!'<sup>2</sup> Especially in later years, however, this uniform was not always described as flattering to his appearance. Sir

Henry Bunbury, who met him in July 1815, described how 'He wore a green uniform with scarlet collar and scarlet edging to the lappels [sic], but without lace or embroidery; small gilt buttons, and gold epaulettes. He had a white neckcloth, white waistcoat and breeches, silk stockings, and shoes with small gilt buckles. A very small old-fashioned sword, with a worked gold hilt, was buckled tight to his hip. He wore the ribbon of the Legion of Honour over his waistcoat, and the star, in silver embroidery, on

his coat'; but, thought Bunbury, 'he is fat, and his belly projects; but this is rendered more apparent by the make of his coat, which has very short lappels turned back, and it is hooked tight over the breast to the pit of the stomach, and is there cut away suddenly, leaving a great display of white waistcoat'<sup>3</sup>

Napoleon was also often portrayed wearing the coat of the *Grenadiers à Pied* of the Imperial Guard, of a similar cut to the *chasseur* coat but in dark blue, with scarlet cuffs, piping and turnbacks (bearing gold grenades), white square-cut lapels and cuff flaps, gilt buttons and gold epaulettes. In 1814 and 1815 he was supplied with

Right: Napoleon as First Consul (print by Meret after Applan).

Below: Napoleon in the uniform of the Grenadiers à Pied of the Imperial Guard (print after P. Delaroche).



uniforms of the National Guard (of the 1812 infantry style with closed lapels, but with silver buttons and epaulettes), perhaps to raise the morale of these troops by wearing their uniform. A rather more unlikely form of regimental

uniform — perhaps never worn — was a cuirassier helmet and breastplate produced in 1806, very much more ornate than the ordinary pattern, the cuirass enamelled black and the belt and trimming in red velvet, with much embroidery. Any form of protective clothing was spurned by Napoleon; Las Cases once remarked on popular stories that claimed he wore a mail shirt under his coat, as a way of explaining his increase in girth in later years. Napoleon replied that this was just one of a thousand absurdities which had been told about him, and that he had never adopted any protections against threats to his person; trusting instead to his 'lucky star'<sup>4</sup>

Almost as familiar as the characteristic hat was the grey greatcoat worn by Napoleon on campaign, double-breasted and without any decoration. Although this is the garment most often depicted, it was not the only style of overcoat used by Napoleon. A dark blue, caped cloak (with gold lace on the cape) was evidently also in his wardrobe, as one is mentioned at Marengo and as late as 1813. In winter he was known to wear a longish coat sometimes styled a *pelisse* (though not the hussar jacket normally associated with that term); Gros' picture of Eylau shows such a garment in grey-buff or *ecru* colour, with a dark fur collar, cuffs and edging, fastened across the breast by heavy gold cords. In Russia in 1812 he wore a similar garment in dark green, but unlike the Eylau, in which he is portrayed with his ordinary hat, he is shown with a low fur cap, like a squat busby with a fabric top. The Württemberg artillery officer Christian Faber du Faur, who produced many eye-witness images of the Russian campaign, depicted Napoleon in what was evidently a different head-dress, a low cap with vertically-fluted fabric sides and a fur head-band which had flaps to fasten under the chin, covering the ears; this is shown with an ordinary greatcoat rather than the furred and braided '*pelisse*'. A similar style of furred





Left: Napoleon in the uniform of the *Chasseur à Cheval* of the Imperial Guard (print after Horace Vernet).

Below: The classic Napoleonic uniform: grey greatcoat worn over the undress coat of the *Chasseurs à Cheval* of the Imperial Guard (print after Meissonnier).



pelisse was apparently also used by Napoleon when travelling in his coach on campaign, in conjunction with overall trousers, a fur-edged velvet forage-cap and furred slippers<sup>1</sup>.

Among other styles of dress worn by Napoleon, perhaps the most unlikely was a confection of Turkish-style robes which he considered wearing in Egypt in 1798, evidently as a way of improving relations with the *Divan* (council of state) of Cairo, whose members were allied to the French but refused to wear the tricolour cockade or sash as an overt sign of allegiance. Napoleon did not actually appear in public in his turban and kaftan, however; Bourrienne records that he appeared so uneasy and self-conscious in such a bizarre costume that his staff persuaded him to take it off, and he was never again tempted to repeat the experiment.

The decorations worn in uniform by Napoleon rarely varied. After the institution of the *Légion d'Honneur* in 1802, he customarily wore its scarlet ribbon over the right shoulder, with its rosette and enamelled star at the left hip; he is usually

portrayed with the ribbon over the waistcoat but beneath the coat, but sometimes with the ribbon over the coat. On the left breast of the coat he wore the five-armed 'cross' (or star) of the same order, in silver embroidery (or embroidery with a metal centre), sometimes shown as partially concealed by the edge of the lapel. Higher upon the left breast he is usually depicted wearing the medal of the *Légion d'Honneur* upon its scarlet ribbon, often accompanied by the medal of the Order of the Iron Crown upon a yellow ribbon with blue edges. (This decoration was instituted by Napoleon on 5 July 1805, shortly after his coronation as king of Italy; its title was taken from that of the ancient crown of Lombardy which according to tradition included in its construction iron from a nail of Christ's cross). At Tilsit Napoleon is recorded as wearing over the right shoulder the light blue ribbon of the Russian Order of St. Anne, out of respect for the Czar●

#### Notes

- 1 *Memoirs of the Life, Exile and Conversations of the Emperor Napoleon*, Count de La Cases, London 1834, II p. 48.
- 2 *ibid.*, II p. 46.
- 3 *Memoirs and Literary Remains of Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Edward Bunbury Bt.*, ed. Sir Charles Bunbury, London 1868, p. 305.
- 4 *Las Cases*, II pp. 48-9.
- 5 A reconstruction of this unusual costume, by Maurice Toussaint, may be found in *Les Uniformes du Premier Empire; La Maison de L'Empereur*, E.L. Bucquoy, ed. Lt.Col. Bucquoy & G. Devautour, Paris 1977. This work, which reproduces the famous Bucquoy cards, includes many illustrations, and supporting text, concerning Napoleon's personal uniforms.



# Enough is Enough

**PROFESSOR LAWRENCE FREEDMAN** is a leading military advisor to the Labour Government. His judgements carry much weight within the Cabinet Office.

**ROBERT NOTT** gets his views on the present state of our military defences. Do you agree with him?

Professor Lawrence Freedman is one of the foremost experts in the field of defence studies. At present he is on sabbatical to the Cabinet Office advising the Government on defence matters and so provides a crucial insight into the current direction of the Labour Government's defence policy. As Professor and Head of the Department of War Studies at King's College London, he presides over one of the foremost institutions for military analysis in the world. He has held research posts at Nuffield College Oxford and at the International Institute for Strategic Studies before being appointed to the Chair of War Studies at King's College in 1982. As Honorary Director of the University of London's Centre for Defence Studies, a Fellow of the British Academy and with a CBE in the Queen's Birthday honours in 1996, his role as a leading advisor on military affairs is without equal. Professor Freedman's main contribution has been his analysis of the later Cold War and the difference that weapons of mass destruction have made to our understanding and execution of global politics, including *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, *The Price of Peace* and *Nuclear War and Nuclear Peace*. Apart from this he has authored definitive titles on the Falklands War and the Gulf Conflict and so has a clear understanding of global nuclear and British defence issues. MI asks Professor Freeman what the future holds for the defence of the realm.

## What do you see as the future military threats to Britain over the next thirty years?

There are no direct military threats to Britain. The Islamic countries have insufficient cohesion — socially, economically, politically or geographically — to become a superpower. China may well develop and apply more military muscle but the effects will largely be felt in Asia not Europe. The problems therefore will be in disruption in the regions away from the U.K. which raise broad questions of international

order and regional stability. The U.K. might well be at risk from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, as well as the indirect impact of disruption elsewhere.

## Are we preparing for these treats by cutting back further and further on current defence expenditure?

The current level of defence spending is probably about right. Without a more severe direct threat it would be unrealistic to expect more.

## What is the effect of these cutbacks on the high-tech military edge that Britain enjoys over most other nations? It is likely to continue and what effect will it have on the development of further projects such as a 'strategic missile umbrella'?

There will have to be a shift from platforms to weapons and electronics, and from dedicated military systems to more commercial off-the-shelf systems. I'm not sure what a 'strategic missile umbrella' is. The U.K. has trident for deterrent purposes and there are limits as to how far we can go down the BMD route.

## How important is it for Britain to play a major part in its own defence? Could we or should we ever stand alone and does an inability to stand apart from a UN/NATO/European military amalgam diminish our influence in world affairs?

The 'stand alone' scenario is now very remote. Our influence comes from the professionalism of our armed forces and demonstrated ability to work closely with allies in multilateral operations, and if necessary take a leading role.

## Why have military and defence affairs become sidelined in British politics today?

Because the country is not at direct risk and the Labour Party has learned that an anti-defence posture is not popular.



## Is it a cultural thing? Does no one want to prepare for war in the hope that it will go away?

It is a geographical thing, we are not under direct threat. The U.K. still takes war more seriously than others.

## Has a century of military success bred an atmosphere of indifference to the realities of power politics?

Power politics is not what it was, and tends to be regional rather than global now.

## Is the amalgamation of regiments and the ditching of traditional uniforms a part of this ongoing process?

What process? This is the logic of rationalisation.

## Will the loss of military strength and abandonment of our military heritage lead to a lack of belief in our national character — is defeatism now part of our national psyche?

I don't think we are defeatist at all. The Falklands, Gulf and Bosnia are all seen as positive achievements (at least for armed forces). I can't remember this country being less defeatist.

## Is the U.K. destined to become a third rate power, if it has not already become so? Could the maintenance of high quality professional armed forces help to reverse this in a way that global political, economic or colonial strength cannot?

The U.K. is one of the second rank of powers which can now hold its own in comparison with other members of the G7 (other than the U.S.). Professional armed forces are a critical attribute of this country ●



# 'Chopping Wood'

When British cavalry fought in Flanders, Austrian observers compared their sword play to 'chopping wood' with many wounds being self-inflicted.

The British Army reacted by devising a new sword and a new sword drill.

STEPHEN BULL follows the steps to this break-through in British fighting skills.



Above: A caricature of Lieutenant Colonel Samuel Hawker in Light Dragoon officer's uniform, c1800, complete with 1796 Pattern sword, sword knot, and sabretache. Hawker served with the 16th Light Dragoons in the Netherlands, and later led the 14th in the Peninsula. He was badly wounded at Talavera in 1809 and returned to Britain, being promoted Major General in 1811.

The 1796 Pattern sword of the British light cavalry, carried throughout the Napoleonic era, was one of the most popular weapons of the period and has since become equally esteemed by collectors. Its elegance and effectiveness are easily appreciated, but the fact that it was seen as part of a radical improvement of the light cavalry generally and the key to a new and deadly sword drill, is less often understood.

## The light cavalry sword

Prior to 1788, there were no 'standard' cavalry swords in the army. Regimental provision was a riot of free enterprise and beyond the general supposition that there would be uniformity within the regiment, and that heavy cavalry swords were better long and straight with elaborate guards, and that light cavalry swords were better with a simple hilt and a

slight curve, variety was the order of the day. Colonels chose and often supplied these weapons, some of which have been positively identified in the present century.<sup>1</sup>

In 1788 some attempt was made to rectify the position, prompted perhaps by the results of the American War of Independence. A board of general officers under General Henry Seymour Conway met and examined

examples of swords from all the regiments. Regarding the swords of the light dragoons it was recommended that the hilts remain of the existing simple 'stirrup' style: 'five inches long in the grip - the blades to be thirty-six inches long and the curve in the centre to be one inch and three-quarters from the straight line - the breadth to be one inch and a half at the shoulder - the blade to be three-eighths of an inch thick and to finish about eleven inches from the point'.<sup>2</sup>

The board recommended that officers should carry the same pattern of sword as their men. It also went on to consider whether German imported blades were superior to the English, and what was the best method of testing. Evidence was taken from the English manufacturers Thomas Gill, Samuel Harvey and James Woolley, as well as from the importer J.J. Runkel.

Tests conducted on the spot suggested that the German product was better and the board concluded that the best test of blade quality was to strike them on a piece of wood or iron, and to bend them two inches for every foot of blade length without damage. Although a levy was recommended on the import of foreign blades, regiments would remain free to choose their own sources of supply. Some of the English manufacturers were less than pleased with these findings, Thomas Gill for example later issued his own opinions in a document entitled *The Superiority of English Swords of Mr Gill's Manufacture*.<sup>3</sup>

Despite contrary opinions, the board's findings were accepted and thus came into existence the group of swords commonly known as '1788 Pattern'. No doubt this was an improvement over the previous generation, but the outline which the board had provided was hardly precise and the testing procedure not unduly rigorous. The swords of the cavalry would soon receive hard enough testing on campaign in Flanders in 1793, and it was here that the man with the greatest claim to be accredited as the 'author' of the 1796 Pattern light cavalry sword entered the story.



## Le Marchant

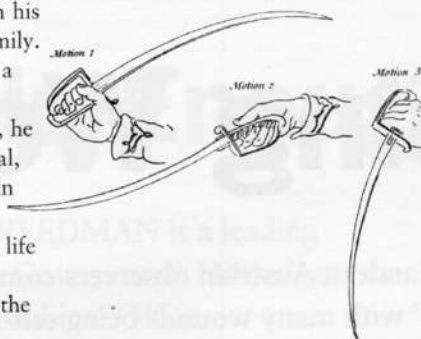
Ironically John Gaspard Le Marchant was born in Picardy France, in 1766, although his father's line was an ancient Guernsey family. John's first military experience had been a commission in the Wiltshire Militia, purchased for him by his father. By 1783, he had become regular with the 1st, or Royal, Regiment of Foot with whom he served in Ireland and Gibraltar. His ambitions, however, stretched well beyond garrison life and the line infantry, and his father was prevailed upon to buy him a cornetcy in the 6th, or Inniskilling Dragoons. This unit provided George III with his escort en route to his summer retreat at Weymouth in June 1789 and the ambitious young officer soon came to the notice of his monarch. Le Marchant had another powerful friend in Sir George Yonge, Secretary at war, who noted his skill as a water colour painter. Yonge acquired for Le Marchant a Lieutenancy in the 2nd Queen's Dragoon Guards. It was in this regiment, though by this time advanced to the rank of Captain, that he would observe the poor performance of the cavalry and the army as a whole in the campaign of 1793.<sup>4</sup>

During the Flanders expedition Le Marchant not only sketched 'all the articles in the military equipage of our Allies which differ from our own' but was able to note the relative skill and training which the Austrian cavalry had over the British. As one Austrian officer remarked to him, the British sword play was 'most entertaining' but put him in mind of somebody 'chopping wood'. Le Marchant saw first hand a captain of Dragoons who came close to severing his own foot in a melee, and had the opinion of the regimental surgeon, William Tudor, that a good number of cuts were accidentally inflicted.

Back in England, and now serving with his fifth regiment as a major in the 16th, or the Queen's Light Dragoons, Le Marchant resolved to do something about the woeful state of affairs. This would involve not merely redesigning the existing sword pattern, but more importantly devising a new standard sword drill together with an organised way of training it to the recruits. In the summer of 1795 came a heaven sent opportunity; the King was again at Weymouth and the 16th Light Dragoons were in attendance. Le Marchant raised the question of cavalry sword drill and the King promised his support.<sup>5</sup>

### The new sword drill

Le Marchant's new drill was based on the premise that 'to become a perfect cavalry swordsman, horsemanship is indispensably necessary'. Nonetheless recruits would begin to learn their drill on foot. The light cavalry sword was primarily a cutting weapon and according to Le Marchant all blows were to be delivered with the arm straight, this not only gave the best 'reach' but did not expose



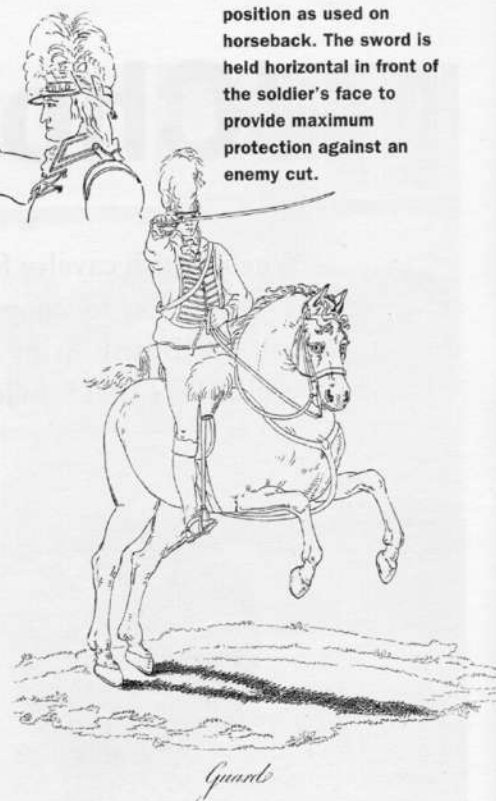
Above: Cut number one as depicted in the 1796 *Rules and Regulations for the Sword Exercise of Cavalry*. Note that the helmet of the soldier bears the legend 'XVI LD' — 16th Light Dragoons. Since the new 1796 Pattern sword and the 1796 sword drill were developed concurrently, the drill book was actually illustrated with the slightly less robust looking 1788 type sword.

the sword arm as would be done if the elbow were bent. An enemy blow to the elbow would indeed be catastrophic for 'a cut in that quarter may be made with the greatest security; and if it be well directed, with the most fatal effect, as it at once decides the issue of the contest'.<sup>6</sup>

In the new system there were six 'cuts' and eight 'guards' for use against cavalry. The cuts were best practiced with the swordsman facing a wall six feet away upon which was drawn a circle four feet from the ground and two feet in diameter; this was divided diagonally into quarters by two lines and bisected horizontally by a third. The blows would then be directed against this notional opponent on which the lines represented the cuts. The sword was always to be used with a knot 'made of leather, not too thick, but capable of shaping itself to the wrist'. This knot would prevent the sword being lost in combat, and even when the sword was sheathed the dragoon was enjoined to keep the knot loosened so as to be readily slipped over the hand.

The six cuts were diagonally downward, right to left; the same left to right; upward right to left and vice versa; and finally horizontally sweeping in both directions. The sword drill directed that these be taught as a series of motions, 'by numbers'. In delivering all the cuts the hand was directed in the general direction of the opponents left ear, the force being derived rather from the sweep of the blade and the flexing of wrist and fingers than any motion of the arm. The sword and its guard also provided the best protection in this position.

The eight 'guards' were the basic position across the front; 'left' and 'right protect'; horse 'nearside' and 'offside' protect, and three more complex positions. These were protecting the bridle arm by means of the



Below: The basic 'Guard' position as used on horseback. The sword is held horizontal in front of the soldier's face to provide maximum protection against an enemy cut.

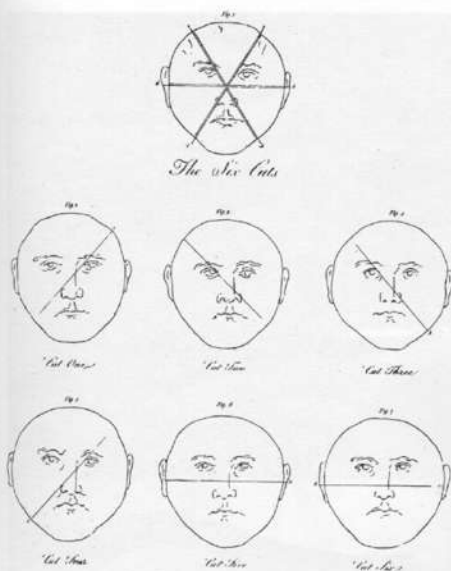
sword held over the head point downward, a similar position intended to guard the sword arm itself and finally the 'St. George'. This posture, otherwise more prosaically known as the 'head protect', saw the sword held transverse across the top of the head, protecting it against any downward swipes.<sup>7</sup>

Le Marchant considered there was small utility in using the 'point' against other cavalry in the charge. The enemy, if agile, would manage to get his blade within the guard, and in any case a charging cavalryman might as well close at the 'left' or 'right protect', since the charge was most dependent on the shock of impact of man and horse. Against infantry, however, the point was useful, and, being directed downward put little strain on the sword arm. The parry and cut could also be directed against infantry on either side of the mount.

Critically Le Marchant believed that only the last four or five inches of the blade should be applied when giving the 'edge'. To this end, only the last six inches of the blade needed sharpening. One of the main reasons was ease of extraction; a swinging close slash with a blade sharpened over its full length would have dramatic effect but would leave the assailant locked with his wounded protagonist and vulnerable to intervention by others.<sup>8</sup>

The first guinea pigs of the new drill were a cadre of 20 troopers from the 16th Light Dragoons who tried its methods in the summer of 1796. After approval by a board of general officers, Le Marchant was instructed to teach it to the light cavalry as a





Above: A diagrammatic representation of the six cuts from the 1796 sword drill. When practicing the troopers could use turnips set up on sticks to represent the heads of the enemy.

whole, setting up successive schools in different parts of the country to which would be sent an officer and 20 men from each regular and fencible regiment and such volunteers as could be accommodated. Beginning at Tunbridge Wells in October 1796 and with a 'staff' for the school of an officer and six NCOs, Le Marchant had finished his task in six months. Each 'course' lasted between two and five weeks, during which time the students used old swords for 'drill purpose' so as to avoid spoiling their own. The men passed through three 'classes'; the first of foot drill, the second on horseback and the third combining all elements at speed. The most active men and best riders would receive instruction first whether or not they were NCOs and these could then aid the teaching of others.' When performing in formation or as a parade drill, all men acted on shouted instructions, keeping an eye on the 'fleugelman' or 'marker' on either flank as their cue. In a confused fight the dragoons were encouraged to choose their own strokes and timing to outwit the individual opponent.

Training was helped by the use of a few simple aids. Application of the 'edge' was practiced against turnips set up on sticks, or against specially constructed 'edge posts' which held a willow twig at the desired height. Accuracy of the point was tested by running at a 'ring post'; this held a ring of metal with an internal diameter of four inches which the horseman would attempt to skewer as he rode past. As skill increased, the size of the ring could be decreased.

### The New Sword

Since the production of the new sword and drill were concurrent, the figures which



*Horse near Side Protect*

Left: The 'horse near side protect', from the 1796 drill, demonstrated on foot.

accompanied the new drill book were pictured with the old 1788 Pattern sword. The illustrations were, for the most part, the work of Le Marchant's brother in law, Cornet Peter Cary, 16th Light Dragoons. First experiments for a new sword were conducted with

the aid of regimental armourers, and Major General Lord Harrington, who furnished Le Marchant with a 'brute of a sword with a massive brass hilt'.

This, however, was not what Le Marchant had in mind. His idea was to apply lessons learned from the sharply curved swords of the new east, made in fine damascus steel and suited to the natural slashing tendencies of a swordsman in melee. Likely models for the process included the Turkish 'kilij', the Indian 'Shamshir', and the best of the existing 1788 Patterns. As Le Marchant himself observed 'without a doubt the expertly used scymitar blades of the Turks, Mamalukes, Moors and Hungarians have proved that a light sword, if equally applicable to cut or thrust, is preferable to any other'.<sup>10</sup>

Eventually a suitable prototype was fabricated by Henry Osborn, cutler of Bordesley, Birmingham. It was 31½ inches long, measured from guard to point, with a one bar, or stirrup hilt of gilt metal. It immediately impressed Lord Pembroke who ordered an 'exact pattern' arm, and on the recommendation of the Duke of York it was experimentally adopted by the Royal Horse Guards. In 1796, the nominal length was upped to between 32½ and 33 inches and it was formally introduced as the new light cavalry sword. Points which distinguished the new sword from the 1788 Pattern usually included rivetting through the grip and tang, and a steel scabbard. In appreciation of his efforts, Le Marchant was himself presented with two swords, one by Osborn, the other by the Board of Ordnance. Despite the outstanding quality of the new product, Le Marchant had not quite achieved all that he set out to do; he had intended that the new weapon be adopted by all cavalry, heavy and light. In the event a separate straight bladed

'disc' hilt modelled on the Austrian pattern was introduced for the heavies (see MI/97).

### The 1796 sword in use

It is clear that not all light cavalry regiments can have adopted the 1796 in its year of introduction. Doubtless the 16th Light Dragoons were amongst the forerunners but production was still largely a hand operation and complete re-equipment must have taken some years. Despite the fact that this was a 'pattern' arm there are many details of difference between surviving examples. Troopers swords differ in terms of the exact degree of curvature, precise width and may vary in length up to an inch. Grip bindings are of several types, as are the shape of the back strap and knuckle bow.

Most officers would have purchased their own swords and have had at least two examples, a practical fighting sword with minimal embellishment and a more decorative piece for parade and formal events. This latter might well be finished in blue and gilt. Officers of the 10th or Prince of Wales's Own Light Dragoons appear to have maintained a slightly different version of the sword. This has another form of knuckle bow, and the Prince of Wales feathers on the langet.<sup>11</sup> After the Egyptian campaign of 1800 to 1801, Mameluke style dress swords with a pistol shaped grip of elephant or mammoth ivory began to gain popularity with light cavalry officers, though they never completely supplanted the Pattern 1796.

In action, the 1796 Pattern sword gained wide praise from friend and foe. There were many accounts of its use: at Llerena in April 1812, Captain Thomkinson of the 16th Light Dragoons remarked that 'the prisoners were dreadfully cut, and some will not recover. A French dragoon had his head nearer cut off than ever I saw before; it was a sabre cut at the back of the neck'. Before Salamanca Sir Thomas Brotherton, then captain in the 14th, or Duchess of York's Own, Light Dragoons was to record: 'I had an encounter in single combat this day with a very young French officer, between the two lines of skirmishers, French and English, who stood still, by mutual consent, to witness it. The French officer showed great cunning and skill, seeing the superiority of my horse, for he remained stationary to receive me, and allowed me to ride round and round him, whilst he remained on the defensive. He made several cuts at the head of my horse, and succeeded in cutting one of my reins and the forefinger of my bridle-hand, which was, however, saved by the thick glove I wore, though the finger was cut very deeply to the joint. As my antagonist was making the last cut at me, I had the opportunity of making a thrust at his body which staggered him, and he made off. I thought I had but slightly wounded him, but I found, on enquiry the next day, when sent on a flag of truce, that the thrust had proved mortal, having entered the pit of his stomach.



I felt deeply on this occasion and was much annoyed, as I had admired the chivalrous and noble bearing of this young officer'.<sup>12</sup>

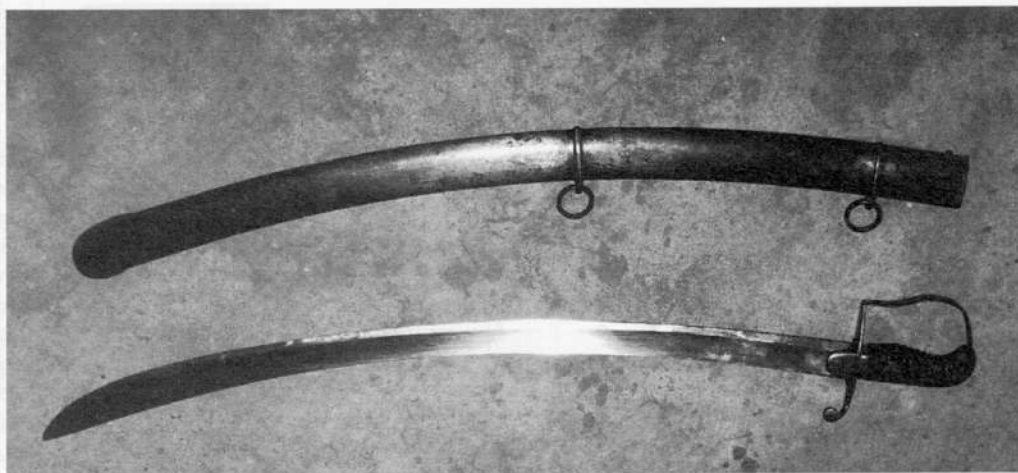
It was ironic that soon after Brotherton had made such effective if unorthodox use of the 1796 Pattern sword its author should be shot down at his moment of triumph. Le Marchant, now a Major General in charge of a heavy cavalry brigade, and also fighting at Salamanca, had led his men, smashing through the 66th, 22nd and 15th infantry regiments. According to one relation he accounted for six enemies personally with his Osborn-made sabre. Placing himself at the head of a half squadron of the 4th (Royal Irish) Dragoon Guards he was in the act of pushing some French stragglers into the forest when a shot cut through his sash and broke his spine, killing him instantly.

One should not believe that the 1796 Pattern sword was either infallible nor unbreakable, despite one maker's proud boast that his blades were 'Warranted never to fail'. Brotherton states that he succeeded in breaking one on a French dragoon helmet, and he also noted the inferiority of the design at the moment of impact against the straight swords of the French heavy cavalry at the charge. In truth the 1796 Pattern was ideal for a one to one fight, a confused melee, or cutting down infantry but it was not designed for the head on charge against cavalry. Doubtless this is why the authorities chose it for the light cavalry but sought another solution for the heavies.

Brotherton experienced a problem of a different sort when in action at Hasparren in December 1813 against the 13th Chasseurs and the 2nd Chambrun Hussars. Cut off from support, his orderly had his bridle hand 'nearly chopped off' and was run through. Brotherton then received no less than eleven thrusts but survived due to the wearing of 'a buffalo leather cuirass' which he had had made at Madrid following a previous wounding. Trying to surrender his sword he was unable to let go due to the knot, and only by shouting his intention in French was his life spared.

### The Longevity of the Pattern

In theory, the 1796 Pattern light cavalry sword should have ceased to be used about 1822 when a new 'three bar' pattern sword was produced. In practice, however, many regiments continued to use the old sword for much longer. Paintings by Drahonet in the Royal Collection suggest that the 3rd Hussars, 14th and 15th Light Dragoons and mounted artillerymen were still using it in 1832. It is known that the 10th Hussars finally began to receive new swords in November 1834, but perhaps the 14th Light



**Above: The 1796 Pattern light cavalry sword together with its scabbard. The characteristic knuckle bow and the curve of the broad blade are typical but details and the amount of decoration vary considerably from piece to piece. Officer's swords commonly exhibit features such as blue and gilt decoration or inscriptions.**



Dragoons hold the record amongst the regular cavalry since their regimental history records that they did not give up the 1796 Pattern until 1 January 1840. This was especially surprising since the 14th had been stationed in Britain and Ireland since 1816.<sup>13</sup>

In India, the 1796 Pattern stayed in use until at least the 1840s. Sir Joseph Thackwell, an officer of the 15th King's Hussars who had lost an arm at Waterloo and subsequently served as commander of the cavalry of the 'army of the Indus', reported that the new swords were too cumbersome for native troopers who preferred to retain the 1796 Pattern.<sup>14</sup> Amongst the Indian population in general, 1796 style blades remained sought after since they could be married up with the traditional 'tulwar' hilt. In Britain, the Yeomanry retained the 1796 Pattern for many years, and it is thought that many survived in provincial arsenals well into the 1850s. Proof of the international standing of the sword came from Prussia, where in 1811 a very similar weapon was adopted.

### Official, Regimental and Makers Marks

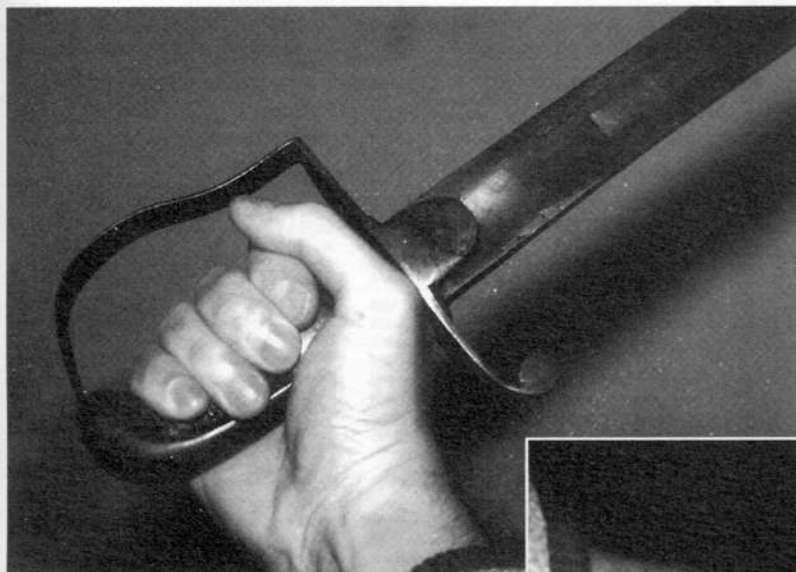
It is usually possible to tell something of the history of a 1796 Pattern sword's history from its marks. This is particularly true of the presentation piece, but even ordinary other ranks swords, which were government property, will usually bear official marks, and possibly a regimental distinction. Amongst the marks most commonly encountered is a small crown with a number, which is a

'viewers mark' and denotes quality control. A 'broad arrow' or 'crows foot' is a mark of government ownership which goes back to the fourteenth century; 'BO' stands for 'Board of Ordnance'. Royal cyphers will also be encountered occasionally, usually the 'GR' of George III, perhaps with a crown, and in various styles and sizes.

Regimental abbreviations or numbers, sometimes known as 'rack marks' normally take the form of a three part inscription, as for example '18. Hs. G3', meaning 18th Light Dragoons (Hussars), G troop, sword three; or '21 LD. B17' signifying 21st Light Dragoons, B troop, sword 17. For regular cavalry most such inscriptions can be decyphered with the aid of army lists for the relevant period. Where this is not possible it is likely that the unit mark refers to a Yeomanry or Volunteer unit; these are generally more difficult but many can be deduced with the aid of the 'Yeomanry and Volunteer' list of 1804, or the chart of Volunteer units published in 1806.<sup>15</sup> It should also not be forgotten that substantial numbers were supplied to the colonies, and East India company. Reference material here is extremely thin, but attribution may be aided by the presence of other features, as for example wood and leather scabbards which were popular in the subcontinent.

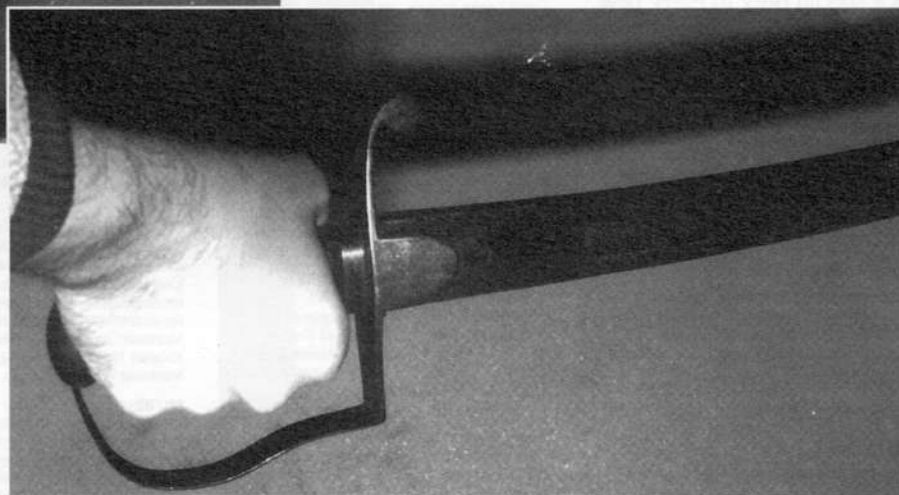
Officers swords will not usually have official marks, being private purchases, but will sometimes have regimental motifs in place of, or addition to, any more





Left: Forehand view of the grip normally adopted when using the 1796 Pattern light cavalry sword. According to the drill cuts were as far as possible to be delivered with a straight arm, the wrist and fingers doing much of the work.

Opposite: Hilt detail of a 1796 Pattern light cavalry sword, showing the knuckle bow, wooden grip, which would originally have been leather covered, and the 'langets' on either side at the top of the blade. This particular weapon is reputed to be associated with Captain Du Cane of the 20th Light Dragoons who served in South America and the Peninsula, c1807-1813.



Below: Back hand view of the 1796 Pattern light cavalry sword, showing how the knuckle bow and quillon might serve to protect the hand.

conventional decoration such as foliage, Royal arms, or trophies of arms. Amongst the better documented regimental symbols are, the Prince of Wales feathers, associated with several regiments including the 10th or Prince of Wales's Own Light Dragoons; the words 'the King's Hussars' for the 15th King's Hussars, and 'XVI' which is the number of the 16th or 'Queen's Light Dragoons'.

Maker's marks vary considerably; some pieces have nothing to distinguish them, some a small stamp, others have a full blown inscription, with name and address in elegant copperplate, especially on presentation pieces. Some of the names appearing are those of the manufacturers, but others refer simply to a cutler, finisher or supplier. In the case of blades marked 'Runkel' the name is that of the importer John Justus Runkel, a German domiciled in England and freeman of the cutlers company from 1796 to 1806. These blades were made in Solingen, and for the most part exported to England via Emden. The list of makers and suppliers at the end of this article is by no means exhaustive but may be useful to the collector or researcher. The best single source of data is the list of sword cutlers in WE May and PGW Annis, *Swords for Sea Service* (HMSO 1970). In the case of all marks collectors should be wary of inscriptions which do not agree with contemporary calligraphy or orthography. On occasion original owners marked swords retrospectively, but unfortunately many legends have been added in recent times merely to enhance value by

association with a well known name or unit. The present writer has for example seen no less than three swords which by attribution or inscription claimed to have been 'carried by Sir John Moore at Corunna'•

#### Notes

- 1 A good number of variations are recorded in GC Neumann *The History of Weapons of the American Revolution*, New York, 1967, pp216-327. Amongst those who have attempted to sort out the regimental connections are the late Peter Hayes, Keeper of Weapons at the National Army Museum, and Anthony D Darling.
- 2 Public Record Office WO 71/11, see also B Robson *Swords of the British Army*, London, 1975, pp14-25, which is undoubtedly the best general work.
- 3 T Gill *The Superiority of English Swords of Mr Gill's manufacture to those of Germany or any other Nation*, Birmingham, 1790. See also T Gill junior 'Recollections of his father' in *Journal of the Arms and Armour Society*, Vol III, 1960, pp171-193.
- 4 D Le Marchant *Memoirs of the late Major General Le Marchant*, London 1841, pp1-13; also R H Thoumine *Scientific Soldier: A Life of General Le Marchant*, Oxford, 1968, pp 1-38.
- 5 Ibid. pp39-60.
- 6 *Rules and Regulations for the Sword Exercise of the Cavalry*, Adjutant Generals Office, 1 December 1796, p2.

General cavalry drill of the period is described in D Dundas *Instructions for Movements of cavalry*, London, 1799, and in Field Exercise for the Troops of *Gentlemen and Yeomen Cavalry*, Canterbury, 1795.

- 7 *Rules and Regulations* p3-33.
- 8 *Rules and Regulations* p73-83.
- 9 A total of five weeks three days was the notional length of the syllabus, at two hours per day. In practice it would appear that many courses were completed faster.
- 10 J G Le Marchant *Notes on Sword Construction* Royal Military College Sandhurst p14, no 1, also Thoumine p44.
- 11 The 10th LD became Hussars in 1806. See Robson p62, also *The 9th/12th Royal Lancers Regimental Journal*, Vol 1, No 4, 1963-1964, p73.
- 12 B Perrett (ed) *A Hawk at War*, Chippenham, 1986, p51.
- 13 H B Hamilton *Historical Record of the 14th (Kings) Hussars*, London, 1901, p202.
- 14 India Office Library p37.15.
- 15 *Volunteer List*, 1804, also J Wilson *A View of the Volunteer Army of Great Britain*, London 1806.

#### Acknowledgements

I should particularly like to thank Keith Matthews and Andy Mitchell for their help in the production of this article, also the museums of the 9th/12th Royal Lancers, 14th/20th King's Hussars 17th/21st Lancers, and York Castle Museum.



# Militaria

The dust has settled on the surrender of handguns and some lucky shooters have received their compensation payments. A Museum Consortium has been given Home Office approval to visit the various police forces to select from the surrendered pistols those items which merit rescue from destruction and a place in a museum. As always the assistance has rather varied from police force to police force and a few, on instructions from their Chief constable, have been less than co-operative, whilst others could not have been more helpful. Some very fine pieces have been saved for posterity but so much is being lost for ever and the overall cost of the operation is rising steadily, having officially reached one hundred and sixty million pounds. Unofficial estimates put the figure very much higher and the number of criminal shootings in the country seems to be as high as ever. Most of those involved in the operation, including many police officers, feel that it is all rather a waste of time and money.

The auction rooms have been busy with sales at Philips, Bonhams, Sothebys and Wallis and Walls. At a Philips sale there was speculation about the price that some papers would fetch for they were relevant to a German World War I spy shot in the Tower. A recent book on executions in the Tower and the release of some previously secret MI5 papers was expected to push up the selling price. In fact, the hammer price was seven hundred pounds, just around the top estimate, but well below the expected figure and the papers went to the archives of the Tower of London. On the same day, Glendining's held a small sale of arms and armour with a hundred and seventy odd lots.

The sale opened with a small selection of Japanese items which usually sell well and these were no exception. The only surprise was that a double-barrelled turnover percussion pistol that had a top estimate of £250 sold for over

£700. The group of eastern arms and armour lots fetched around the top estimates with no surprises and the top price of £1,058 was for a Kindjhal, the type of long decorative daggers worn by such peoples as the Cossacks. The European edged weapons also sold at estimate levels but one again demonstrated the effect that provenance has on price when a typical sword of an Aide De Camp sold for over £1,000. It was used to confer a knighthood on the owner by the Prince of Wales in 1906, a fact which increased its value. The only other item to exceed a thousand pounds was a very fine 17th century German smallsword, the iron hilt chiselled overall with hunting scenes.

The antique firearms included several fine pieces such as a flintlock blunderbuss pistol by Waters with a spring bayonet, that sold for nearly £1,500. Duelling pistols seem to be even more in demand and a pair of saw-handled flintlocks by Tatham & Egg went for just under £2,000 whilst a cased pair by the renowned maker Wogdon sold for £4,140. This pair had silver fittings, hall marked for 1779, but they had been converted to the much later percussion system, a fact that certainly lowered their value. There were very few lots of militaria but a German pilot's watch together with a US dashboard clock sold for £414. There is a growing market for military wristwatches, a field largely unknown a year or two ago. Part of this increased demand is undoubtedly due to a book on the subject recently published and the new knowledge has increased demand. The same increase of value will almost certainly happen with material from the Honourable East India Company. The long-awaited book of the weapons of the Company by David Harding has now been published and it cannot fail to stimulate interest in this field.

The upward trend in the price of Islamic material commented on

in a previous column was continued at Sotheby's Turkish sale, which included some weapons, and a rare Turkish shield that sold for well over ten thousand pounds. Sotheby's also had a militaria sale at their Billingshurst Rooms with around 200 lots. The recent interest in early air weapons seems to have abated a little except for the rarer pieces. Third Reich edged weapons sold at around usual estimate prices and Japanese swords did well including one World War II katana which soared past the top estimate of £300 to sell at £1,667. Scottish regimental dirks made their top estimates with no effort at all, one of the Gordon Highlanders sold for nearly £1,500 and the other of the Seaforth Highlanders went to nearly £1,400. The prize of this section was the Lloyd's patriotic fund sword that made £18,400. It was one of the fifty-guinea type awarded the commander of an East India Company ship for an action in 1804. These swords were presented for acts of outstanding bravery during the Napoleonic wars and are well recorded and since only a limited number were made their value continues to rise.

There was a good selection of militaria including badges and head-dress. The cap badges sold

well with one lot of approximately 160, selling at £805 and another with 77 items going for £747. A silver Georgian shoulder belt plate hall-marked for 1795, estimated at £200-£300 sold at £575. A big surprise was the £1,012 paid for an incomplete Household Cavalry officer's helmet, for the top estimate was £600. There was one big disappointment as a black leather sabretache which carried the order for the notorious charge of the Light Brigade in the Crimean War failed to sell at an estimate of £3,000-£5,000.

In the same sale there was a section of items dealing with flight, aeronautica, with a rich mixture of material ranging from models to uniforms and posters, one of which, a US World War II one, sold at £414. A signed combat report by the First World War ace Mick Mannock dated 13th July 1918 with a top estimate of £800 went well past for the hammer to fall at £1,207.

With the New Year upon us there is speculation as to what it holds, for 1997 was not a very happy one for the dealers in arms and armour who found trade slow. Now that the firearms furore has subsided demand may pick up again.

*Frederick Wilkinson*

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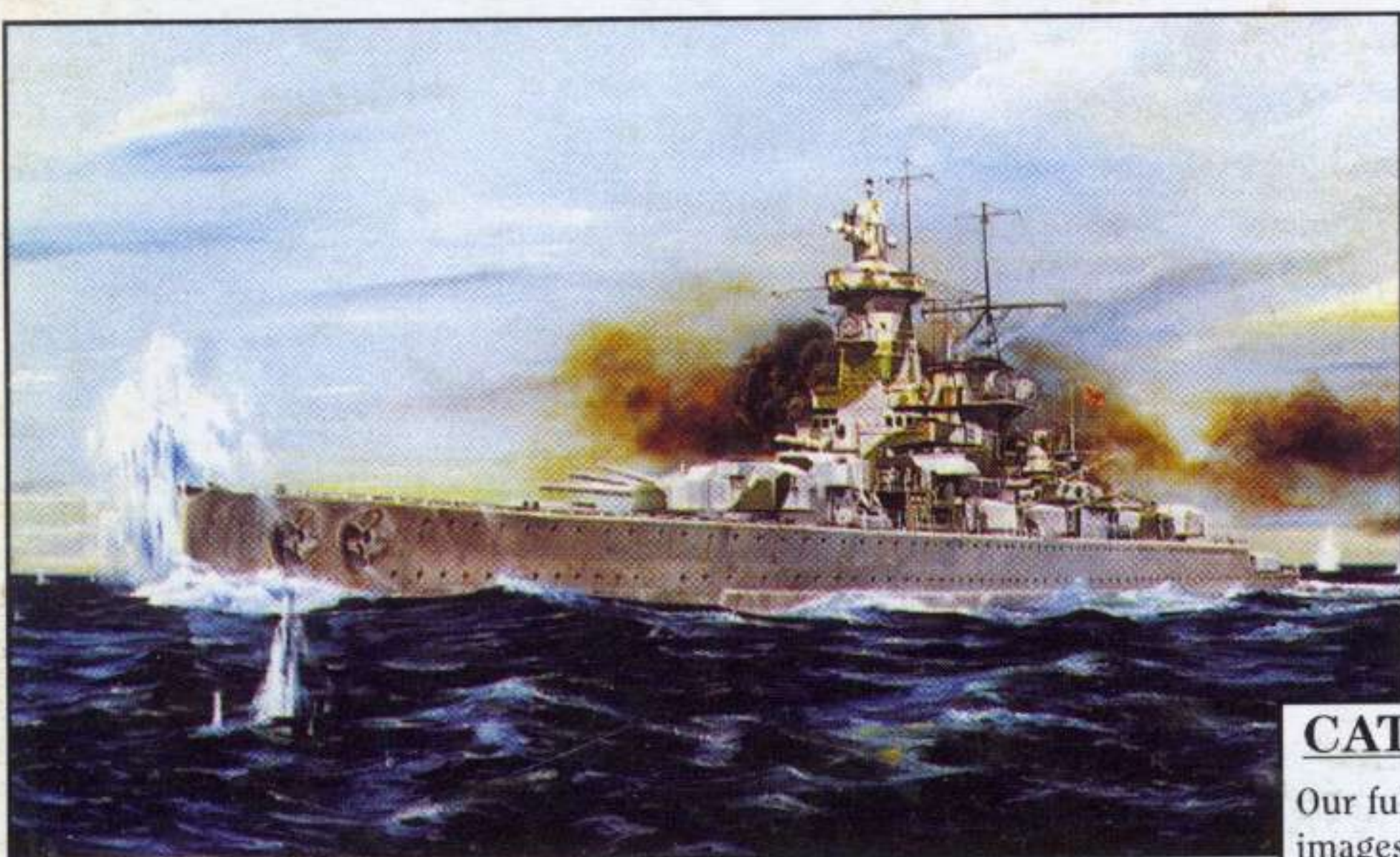




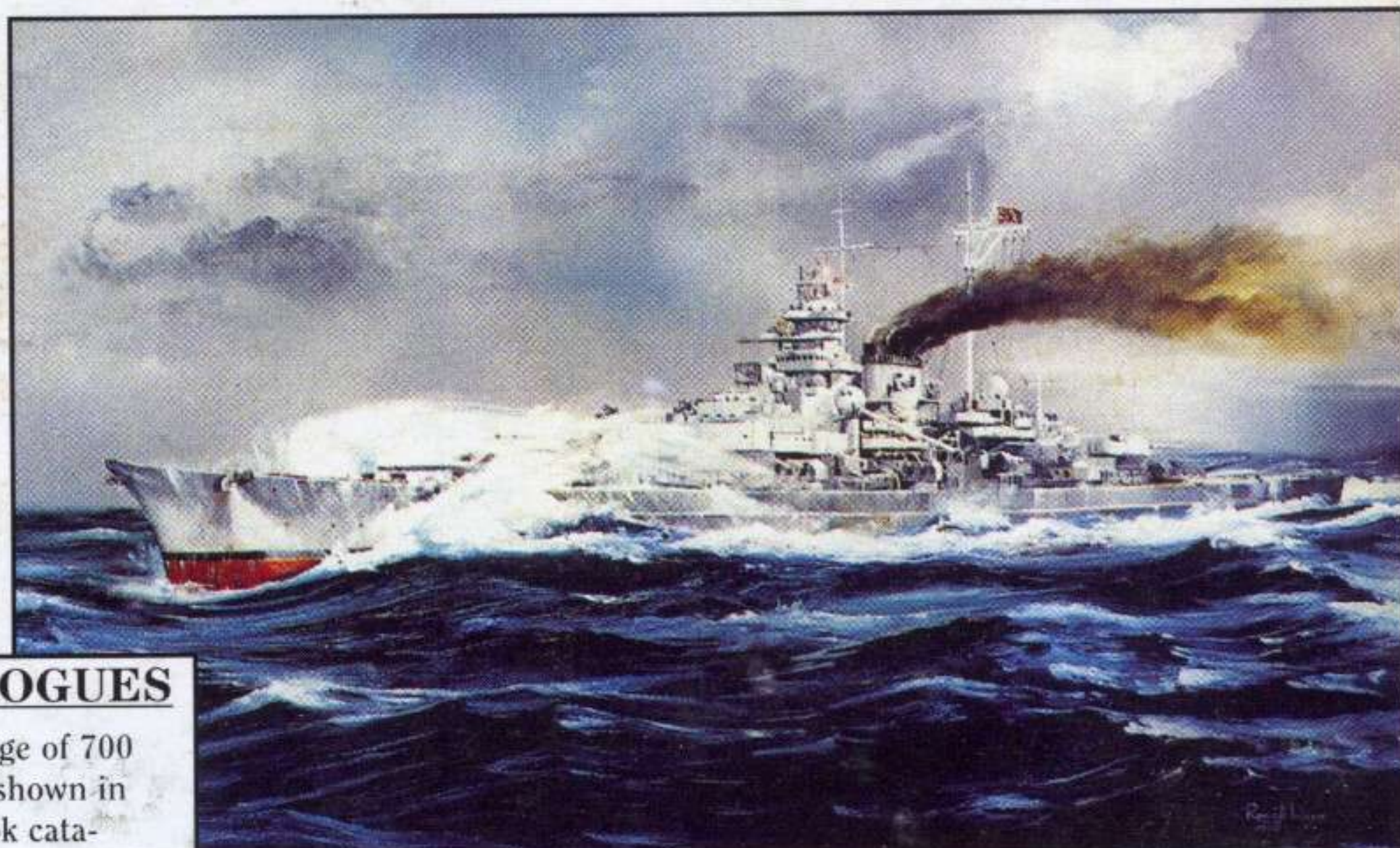
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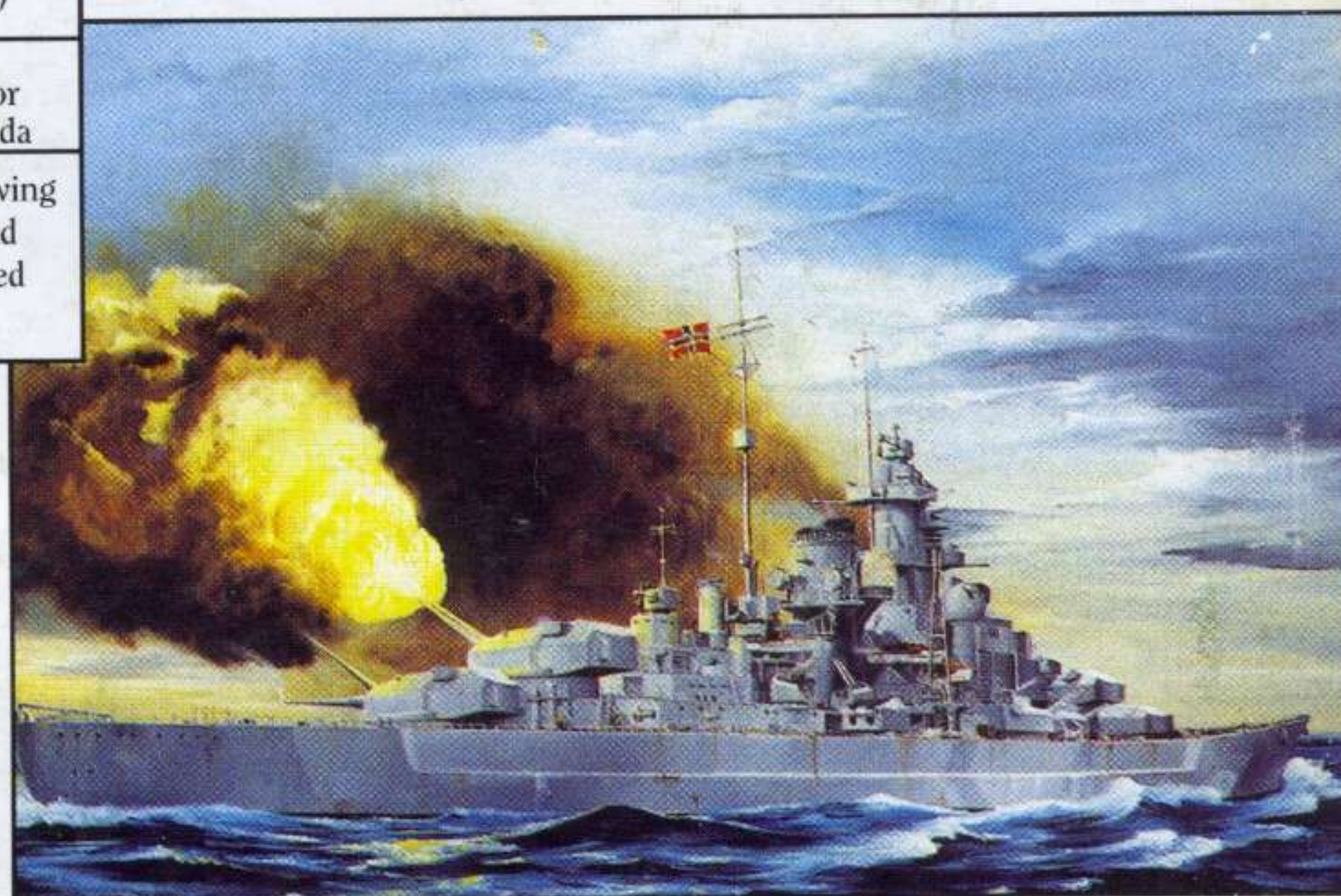
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